

CN Mass Effect: Providence of the Young

by Evident Disaster

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1. Chapter 1

Mass Effect: Providence of the Young

CH1: A routine missionâ€¦

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/Date: 2/1/2186/

/LOCATION: Hawking Eta- Century system-/

The smooth glow of the stars outside were beautiful, they were encompassed by the gases illuminated by the stars around, glowing in vibrant hues of blue to deep magenta, the galaxy was a wondrous place. But even in the beauty of it all, there were many dangers, pirates, collectors, and reapers. But thankfully Shepard had dealt with the collectors. But their damned masters were coming in with a vengeance, and Shepard was finding herself hot under the collar to deal with them.

Now with just months or years to go, the reapers were coming and she knew she had to be prepared, but that didn't mean that she couldn't at least look at the stars outside, they were things of beauty in a hostile galaxy. Shepard herself found this brief reprieve a good turnaround from all the battles and attacks and other problems associated with being the galaxy's greatest hero.

However peace doesn't last long, in her few minutes of stargazing she had to peel away from the port window of her room to the subtle but annoying incessant beeping of her com. She sighed and then picked up the com unit. "Yes EDI?"

"Commander, we are approaching designated location of the anomaly, Jeff would like it if you hurried over here as soon as possible, or in his words. 'Get off your ass because there's something you really need to see!'" A voice yelled over EDI.

"I'm coming down Joker, but this better not be like that prank you pulled in October, try explaining the mess to Gardner when he's bucked under 50kg of baking soda." She replied.

"Hey, that happened once, and it was kind of funny, if he didn't try to poison me a couple of times afterwards, never knew he could do that with a bit of chocolate." Joker stated in defence.

Shepard smiled and just exited her room in her formal wear; she liked the design, even though as worn as it was, still it was pretty good. She arrived at the lift doors, the chrome white circular shape opening to let her into the slow as heck elevator. It took a few moments to get down a level; she would have just preferred to have crawled through the vents if it wasn't for the fact that she felt a little tired today. Spend 9 months hunting down some alien menace from beyond the galactic core and you'll feel like that afterwards.

Upon arriving, she found most of the stations abandoned, she figured either something really was up, or the crew had a surprise planned for her. She walked over to the cockpit, bumping into half the crewmen; they were all here, but they were trying to see something. "Could you all move so I can see what the hell is going on?" She deadpanned loudly over the silence.

They all did and then she walked into the cockpit to see that there was something outside;

"Joker, what is that?" Shepard asked.

"Sure as hell if I know commander, but there is no way that thing is normal."

There was a brilliant light, not much like that of a mass relay, but it was brighter, and it was a solid sphere of energy, and it was just in front of the ship. She didn't need anything else to say that this wasn't normal; as a matter of fact everything about it seemed entrance her mind. The pause in the whole ship was broke as EDI appeared and said.

"Commander, I'm picking up incredibly high traces of subspace emissions, this anomaly is unnatural, quantum energies suggest a type of wormhole/black hole/ or gateway." EDI summarised.

Joker then said. "That or it could just be a massive star that's blowing up at a very slow pace."

"Unlikely Jeff, the power being projected suggests something far more intense than a star being detonated." EDI commented.

"What could be more intense than a star being blown up?" Kelly asked.

"Probably something to do with either black holes or some quantum event, this has never been recorded in galactic history, or never

occurred in galactic history." EDI replied.

"Good thing we're here." Joker said in still awe.

"So what should we do now?" He asked.

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Shepard called up the whole crew into the briefing room, it had gone extensive reconstruction which had costed Shepard a pretty good amount of her fortune, which required her to go and search for more external resources of planets which were the most dubious task she had ever had to do in her career. She was thankful after 3 weeks of strip mining that the ship was at least back up to nominal status, but even so, the cost of replacing hardware and equipment had made her go in search of a few minor jobs.

Hunting for anomalous events had been one of them, to which the University of Thessia had asked for anyone to go in search of this event in the Hawking Eta regions, she had obliged and went on her merry way here. EDI had sent the reports and findings back, at least Shepard knew that the job was done, but still this required a bit more of a look, this anomaly wasn't natural and that was for sure, because it wasn't here 3 years ago, she had EDI search over the history of the cluster on this event and it had never shown up anywhere.

"So what does this mean? Someone decided to rupture a hole in the universe just for the sake of it?" Garrus asked.

"Not a clue, this wasn't ever recorded, and that was the problem, it was never here before. EDI have you compiled a record of the event and possibly when it became active?" Shepard asked, if anything, Shepard had a bit of a scientific streak since her love for Liara.

EDI appeared and replied. "Yes commander, my estimations of the emissions from the time of its projected activation suggests that it was activate 2 years 1 month and 3 days ago, approximately the same time as the Normandy SR1 was attacked and destroyed." She stated.

Shepard felt something hit her gut hard. "This thing came active at the time of the Normandy's destruction?" Tali said in utter confusion.

"That can't be a coincidence, no way would that be a coincidence, the timing is way too much in line with the collectors." Miranda suspected.

Legion commented. "Viable Officer Lawson, but that would not coincide with event accurately, the collector's vessel was only one, and there have been no other recorded vessels of the collectors or even the old machines since then."

"That might be, but still, we didn't trace anything with any type of E-zero residue anywhere in the area, either that or someone kept this place clean, but I doubt that anyone would be able to hide all traces of element zero from scanners." Shepard said.

"So then what is that?" Jacob asked.

EDI appeared and said. "I have 3 possible theories."

"Go ahead." Shepard said.

"The first theoretical event would be that this is a quantum explosion, detonating somewhere else in the universe, the random event has somehow managed to appear here. Second would be that this event is most likely caused by an inversion of incredibly high volumes of Dark Energy being used at once, but this would have to been done by use of more than 5 stars and an incalculable amounts of dark energy. The last would be that this is a subspace portal. It is likely that somewhere else there is a technologically capable race attempting to use this to explore or expand from their galaxy or universe and have gone to certain lengths to accomplish this." She finished.

"Okay, so we have either a random event, possible scientific scenario being used in secret even though it would cost trillions of credits to fund and hide, or a portal where there is a race capable of doing this and it is trying to reach us." Garrus summarised.

"Yep she's going nuts." Joker commented over the coms.

"That is beside the point Jeff; the possibility remains even as unlikely as it is." EDI commented.

"So then, what do we do? Sit on our arses and wait for something magical to happen?" Zaeed asked.

"Not quite, we'll only stick around to figure out what this is, whatever it might be, it might have something to do with the reapers or nothing to do with them and it's just a massive ball of energy suspended by some mystical universal force." Shepard said.

"Well I wouldn't mind a short break, my head's been killing me since I took that blow to the head from that damned sniper during the Shadow Broker thing, that asshole has a lot of good mercs." Jacob said.

"Well at least I get to look around for more little stashes that Joker has hidden away." Kasumi said out loud.

"I need to get back to recalibrating the Thanix Cannons." Garrus said.

"Okay, so everyone in agreement that we just spend a couple of days off?" Shepard asked everyone present. All nodded, except Grunt who shrugged and Jack who honestly didn't care at the moment, Miranda had other plans, Jacob was fine and the others went off to do their own thing.

It was then as they were exiting that Shepard was stopped by a red and white horned scientist. "Mordin what can I do for you?" Shepard asked.

"Not much, just curious, EDI observation very accurate and theories seem quite sound, but I must ask you something. It is very important and few must ever know." He said.

Once the doors closed Shepard asked. "What is it?"

"STG has many secrets, this was one of them, 2 years ago salarian team approached Hawking Cluster under orders, to search for this portal"

"How do you know it's a portal?" Shepard asked.

"Explain later, but you must listen. STG and salarian forces selected a handful of operatives for this mission, it was classified under the highest authority, was not allowed to be shared by anyone, including myself, the operation was to understand portal, however a probe nearby it was sucked into the quantum fields, on the other side it began to transmit signals back to STG. They were surprised to see that there was space, but where it ended up was nowhere near portal; it was only 3 days later a transmission was picked up from probe. Human transmissions from a nearby world on the other side of the portal were coming through."

Shepard interrupted there. "Humans on the other side of the portal, how is that possible, was it another colony?"

"STG did research, the portal did not lead anywhere within our galaxy, the transmissions were being redirected from somewhere else. It was then that the probe went silent, and soon the STG and salarian force prepared to send a team in with a probe to see where it might have ended up. The team left and then there was nothing. Most curious was that the STG forces vanished as well, only 2 days after their team, no one had ever heard from them since." Mordin finished.

"So what, a ghost tale about the portal, how can you be so sure that that even happened?" Shepard asked.

"Because I was there." He said.

"Wait, you were here before, why did you say anything before hand?" Shepard asked.

"I didn't wish to intrude and also, I was curious as to the status of portal, I thought it might have gone in the time I left." He replied sombrely.

"What happened?" Shepard asked.

Mordin looked around; his eyes were showing something that Shepard had never seen much of in the salarian, fear. "I was stationed on cruiser, Tagetha'e, simple cruiser. It was there when things went wrong. One day after team had left, hundreds of signals were being sent, transmission I overheard when working on repairing equipment. They said that there were high energy emissions, much like ion storms and then the communication cut out. I found myself worried, but tried to get back to work, I conversed with other members and concurred that it was a simple ion storm. But things began to worsen, another day passed and soon energy spikes came through the portal, something was happening, and commanding officer ordered to send probes in, all were lost or destroyed"

He paused. "And then it happened. 3 ships came from portal, massive in size, not of known ship designs, but were effective in size and

shape to what they were made for. War, ships began to fire on us and each other, purple shapes launching in all directions and unknown signatures flying across our hull. There were odd humanoid machines, massive ones that attacked us and the others. I was in the lower bridge when the CIC was destroyed, a plasma blast from an enemy ship tore into the Tagetha'e, and I ran for the lower hangar to a shuttle, but when I arrived boarders were attacking. Massive beings, nothing but terrifying in their ability, many crewmen died, I couldn't help, I ran to nearest shuttle, on board there was 3 others, we launched into space and headed onwards as fast as possible to escape. Shuttles were never meant for combat situations, but we managed to escape enemy weapons range, however the unknown machines attacked. Large humanoid machines fired energy weapons into the hull, pilot and one other died, last member with me made desperate jump, shuttle hit FTL when they fired something onto shuttle, and I was knocked unconscious."

"Plasma weapons, energy blasts, large ships? Were they reapers?"

"No, reapers from record use laser projection means, and ships were 1-2km in size, vessels encountered were 5-10, and they possessed an astounding piece of firepower." He commented.

Shepard was surprised, the last time she fought something that could use energy based weapons were the Collectors, but from what Mordin said, there was something far more sinister about these aliens. "What happened afterwards?"

"Arrived back at STG by chance, beacon had signalled for help long enough, 3 days later, I was found nearly starving and cold. But alive, debriefed, STG command ordered that no ship should try to approach area from then on, and made sure that no council vessel did either. Over 1 year it was recorded that 4 ships vanished nearby because of the portal, still battle haunts me. Trauma wasn't taken as well." He finished.

Shepard processed all the information she had just been given, and then she replied. "So, there are a bunch of humans on the other side, and that there are also aliens, and they happen to utilise powerful energy based weapons and technologies that we have never seen before?" She said in short.

"Yes."

"And you never said anything to the council?" She asked.

"There were complications, council only recently suffered from attack by Sovereign, unwilling to listen to such claims, interpreted the event as avoidable, they declared no civilian and no military ships of any force was to ever search for the portal and ordered that a full patrol fleet remain in contact near Hawking Eta. Afterwards the council removed forces after 1 year due to expenses."

"Talk about bureaucracy at its best." She commented.

"Commander I insist that we depart, longer we remain the greater chances of attack." He warned.

"Okay, I'll at least keep us in the Century system, a little sun

there would be better than being out here." She said.

Just as he was going to thank her, alarms began to blare, EDI appeared. "Commander, alert we have 3 unknown contacts closing in from our aft." She warned.

"Any known signatures?" Shepard asked.

"No all are unknown and moving fast, predicted time to intercept 2 minutes."

"Any visual confirmation?"

"Yes."

The holographic image of 3 purple hulled vessels with an eerie organic shape appeared; each seemed smooth, yet impressively large for any vessel she had seen. All seemed to differ in size and design, but with those kinds of ships, it began to remind her of Sovereign. Shepard didn't need any more indication to what had been discussed earlier, if this was what Mordin had warned about, they needed to get the hell out of there and fast.

"Tell Joker to take immediate action, bring us to FTL as soon as possible. Alert all crew to battle stations." She ordered.

"Yes commander."

In moments from their reprieve the whole ship became active; crewmen ran to their stations from their standby and began to work to get the ship to combat level. Joker didn't waste any time and brought the Normandy hard about to point her in the right direction, no need to accidentally crash the ship into a planet, he'd already done that once.

Shepard turned to Mordin. "Those were the ships correct?"

"Yes commander, but it seems that there maybe more." He commented.

"We better get to Joker then." She walked to the cockpit, Mordin didn't know what to say, it was like facing the unknown alien threat again, just worse this was not an STG fleet.

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The Normandy turned sharp towards the direction of the edge of the system, they could make a run and go to FTL from there, and they just had to cross 3 planets and an asteroid field to do so. But there was just a few problems, their unknown tailgaters had more than those three ships.

EDI appeared. "Commander, detecting 6 ships coming to port, they match the others following us, and an additional 9 coming from all other directions." She warned.

"How many ships do these guys have?" Joker panicked.

"Joker focus, EDI, is there any way we can avoid these ships or get around?" Shepard asked.

"None that I can see, our options have been limited, either attempt at flight, or fight." She replied.

"So run at an enemy with unknown weapons and ships which happen to be very fast, or we attempt to fight with what we have against unknowns? And maybe we all should just cover our arses with plates of steel cause neither sound like they're going to work." Joker said hysterically.

Mordin appeared to break from his fears. "There is still another option, risky but better than being caught within enemy crossfire."

"And what would that be?" Shepard asked.

"Going into the portalâ€|" Mordin suggested.

The pause was deafening, but it was pretty surprising. "Going into a portal with no idea what could happen, and hope for the best? While the chances are we'd all either find death more or less painful than what you're suggesting? Wow, I've never felt more confident." Joker said sarcastically.

Shepard contemplated this idea. "Well you have an idea Joker. Cause I sure don't think flying at them with skill is going to save us from 18 large and fast ships with an array of weapons any better."

"Okay, maybe that it's not so bad, but if we all find something worse than just 18 ships, you'll know." He said.

"Enemy closing in 30 seconds, they are charging weapons and preparing to fire." EDI warned.

"Well, now or never, this is going to suck." Joker said.

He pulled the Normandy into a deep corkscrew towards the portal, the sphere much closer was not something someone would like to look at, as a matter of fact Shepard kept feeling as though she was staring at the panoramic view of that damned star in the IMs office it was constantly changing colour and it seemed rather annoying when trying to speak to someone when the light's in your eyes. Well now this was more like that, just that you're trying to fly into it.

"Brace for impact." Joker yelled.

The Normandy hit the tip of the sphere, energy encompassing it as it penetrated the quantum fields and entered into the dimensions known as slip-space. Now one would never know how it felt flying into a quantum anomaly and it is usually recorded as 'don't ever do that without a slip-space drive or you'll know how it's like to be thrown into a tumble dryer and then hung out for the whole day, it really hurts after 5 minutes.'

That experience was remarkably accurate as the whole ship began to spin around, Shepard was flung forwards and then into the floor, Jeff had himself strapped into the chair, which did raise the question of where the seat belts were. But with the whole crew being flung through the air and the ship incapable of stabilising itself no one could ask the question. Shepard was thrown backwards into the rear

wall of the galaxy map and there she grabbed hold of the railing, she just hoped that they didn't take any more heavy twists.

After a few more minutes the ship lost power as it finally exited the portal's control, and they re-entered into real space.

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Shepard had let go of the railing once they had exited the portal, she fell into a minor sleep just from the rough experience of being tossed through the room like a ragdoll and deposited on to the floor in a manner that would usually set the stage for a few arguments. But the fact was that she was alive, and in some rather obvious pain, she could feel that she hadn't broken anything, but the pain of being tossed around was enough.

The lights came back online once the ship regained power from which everyone could thank EDI for later, Shepard was awoken by a familiar voice. "Commander, are you alright?"

Shepard felt a few shakes before she moved her arm to shoo them away. "Not right now, another 5 minutes please."

"Commander, we just exited the portal and you really need to get back up, seeing as you're lying on top of me." The voice said a little agitated.

Shepard got up in a flash, but a flash to fast, her head was spinning much like when she was hit by that green drink back at Flux, she rather not go there though, her last memory of being there was when she woke up in bed with Liara and Ashley and some paper boy who had been trying to deliver a message. That was something she really tried to avoid in the future. Once her head finished swimming she asked to anyone.

"Okay, status report." She said.

EDI appeared and said. "All systems are coming back to full capacity, all engines are active, but our element zero levels have dropped significantly."

"What?" She said in surprise to the AI.

"Our element zero levels have dropped to 50%, when we entered the portal our E-zero capacitors began to drain almost immediately, only our hydrogen reserves remain with whatever unrefined E-zero we still have from our previous mining efforts." EDI reported.

"Damn, anything else?" Shepard asked.

"Zaeed states that he has garbage strew over his whole room, and Grunt has to deal with his tank falling through the glass window in the hangar. Tali states she might have a solution, and also warns that she had to hold her breath because her mask was shattered in the jump, she's receiving quick treatment from Dr Chakwas as we speak."

"Okay, so no one got really hurt aside from Tali and no one is suffering any more than breathing problems?" She

said.

"Yes."

"Okay, well now we do have to figure out what to do next, is the portal still within range of us?" Shepard asked.

The AI stated simply. "No."

"What?" Shepard said.

"The portal is nowhere within our sensor of visual range, as far as I can tell, the portal is no longer within any range. We were thrown from it at a random set of coordinates; we could theoretically be thousands to hundreds of light years away." EDI reported.

Shepard bent over the table and then said to herself. "We're stranded in what seems to be another dimension from what you said, with about 75% of our E-zero reserves in the middle of nowhere. And from what we encountered there are races of hostile aliens possibly anywhere and chances are we are likely to either starve or run out of fuel or die at the hands of unknowns are almost phenomenal."

"Commander, I do believe that we can survive." EDI said.

"How can we?" Shepard asked.

"I have located over the Normandy's sensors that there are some systems close to our position, some have significant residual energy from subspace fields, and it may indicate either the unknowns or possible civilisation. Also I have picked up minor EM to AM bandwidth from across this region of space; with time we may be able to locate this source of signals." EDI replied.

Shepard looked at the AI and said. "Okay, so we do have a chance of survival, well I'm not an optimist or a realist, but I can say that does sound a bit more promising. If not for the fact that we have no idea where they might be, still, can you manage to locate them with the sensors?" Shepard asked.

"I have already begun that process commander; it will take approximately an hour to complete." She replied.

"Good, inform me once you've done that, I have to speak to Mordin right now."

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Elsewhereâ€¦|

Rey could hear her voice, it was haunting yet so beautiful, and the night seemed to echo her call to him and to all. It was the voice of an angel, the voice of hope. He looked across the barren dirt ridden grounds, grass growing in uneven patterns and trees scattered around, and the world was illuminated by the lights of the stars from above. It was as if an aurora had taken place above the world in unending streams of waves, they were so harmonious, even though they glimmered with traces of dead, their souls turned to dust and particles of their bodies nothing but ionised traces.

Beneath a veil so cold,
You deeply sleep, all alone
The melody of prayer; on the lonely fields,
A little light shined
I watched as you dreamed
You laughed like a child
So dear, and yet so far -
That is the promise of our future
That one day, on a green morning,
One day, we will make it there
Because in this wintered sky
We still believeâ€¦

He lay there grasping at the heavens without another word, waiting for the sun to rise once more, but still encapsulated by the glowing bodies of the celestials above him. They seemed so much more peaceful when he was younger, when all this never happened.

All those lost to the heavens above for humanity, it seemed so much like another lifetime ago, but the reminder was daily and ever present. He continued to listen to the winds of this world call to him.

Fields of Hope

On the day we were born, we were embraced
And now we search for those gentle hands again
The melody of prayer; one vanishes,
And all begins again; a powerless, painful continuation
One day, to that green morning,
We'll cross through all these nights
Because that is the place each one of us searches for
Now, within my own heart,
I want to keep you warm
So dear, and yet so far -
In the name of peace

He felt the world drift as he finally succumbed to sleep, his mind drifting over to his memories, his neural chip letting his mind rest,

as it finally decided to allow for a reprieve. He knew it would be short, but it was welcomed. He could see her again just one last time before he would be going back, to the world he was truly trapped within.

The plains so warm, the heavens glowed all above, yet the earth below was alit, the grass and waters of the lakes and oceans it was all alive with light. He could see someone, the voice pulled him towards her, her eyes settled on him, and she smiled.

"Reyâ€|"

He stopped, he knew he couldn't cross the stream yet, he needed to complete his duty. Tears welled in her eyes as he replied so calmly.

>"Wait for me mother, when I die. Then we can be together forever."<p>

Fields of Hope

So dear, and yet so far -

The fields of promise

Fields of Hope

Fields of Hope

He opened his eyes from his sleep, he knew that the more he slept the closer he drifted closer to death, he'd be grasped by mother if he ever went to close he may never return. He knew he couldn't, his brothers were dying and he had to follow their footsteps. That was his purpose wasn't it? To die as a memory to all those to follow as he did, like all the Rey clones?

Krugis' sun rose over the edge of the world, its light bringing once more light upon this world, but a call to war. Rey arose from his standby mode, he pulled the Zodiac MS-05 from its sitting position, its dull blue armour warmed by the light seemed to make it stand out around the whole world. Rey smiled; today he was going to die, like all others they had to. He'd greet it so warmly once his time came, pulling his armaments from the weapons locker next to him, he received the orders to move.

"Unit Rey-0030, departing." He complied.

The MS vaulted itself on external boosters and then activated its engines, it flew off to the dawn, and there was a war to be fought and duty to be held. The covenant would not win this day, he would ensure that.

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In the city called Isethos Port, the city was choked by smoke and the smell of fresh blood. The beings of varying sizes had breached the outer defences and had managed to begin their advance into the city, slaughtering all that stood in their path. Weapons ablaze the armies of the covenant edged themselves ever closer to the planetary defenders lines. Bolts of plasma stitched lines across the field and pinned the defenders down.

It had taken the covenant over 3 days to finally make their way inwards, but they weren't going to find it easy, the PDF wasn't truly the enemy that they were to be afraid to meet. As the elite commander managed to get his troops deployed in a sharp line breaker formation he called them forwards and into the enemy lines, shield jackals and grunts followed by teams of elites and hunters tended to break through usual PDF lines should they have anything heavier than a 50cal Triple barrel anywhere else in the defence.

As they reached the front lines, the PDF began to fall back; the sheer numbers of covenant were overwhelming to them. Dozens fell in the onslaught but still it didn't phase the covenant troops from fighting, it was then that their small victory was suddenly and abruptly ended in a firestorm. 6 missiles from above a building shattered the squad formations, a khaki coloured armoured trooper with a 3 barrelled missile launcher smiled as his squad mates made their attack.

The elite commander had known that this was going to happen, ordering his troops to form a defensive formation the troops obliged and quickly took to cover. But even so, the covenant forces dreaded the one thing more than Demons and little Devils, the Harbingers of actual destruction. The Maraudersâ€|

A dozen armed shock troopers began their counter assault, their weapons ablaze; the covenant infantry took an instant beating from the UCAFs most prominent class of shock troopers. AR carbines and BRs with DMRs tore through ranks rapidly, M7S series SMGs worked to rip through the easier targets while the Assault Rifle series butchered the elites in the formations.

The covenant was caught in a deadly crossfire, even though having over 74 in their favour the UCAF could easily out match 12 times that number quickly, marauders weren't exactly known for their ability to kill things on any planet for nothing. The marines lived up to their reputation quickly; the ARs launched underslung short hand missiles and HE grenades.

The explosions ripped apart dozens of grunts and removed the shields of a few of the elites who took immediate cover from the combined fire of the UCAF. Hunters worked to pin a few of the marines down, but didn't anticipate that they had jump packs and high jump gear; the troops jumped over their heads and began to spray them in deadly fire.

One sniper in the marauder's team threw a resonator blade at range; his target was the unsuspecting elite that had turned to face oncoming fire from its left flank. The blade wasn't noticed until it had cut through the shields and entered into the base of the elite's skull, the alien made a guttural sound before dying in a pool of its own brain fluids.

As the covenant dropped down in numbers the commander ordered a retreat, the covenant fell back as fast as it could, grunts being hacked in droves and jackals and skirmishers following quickly beside their cousins. Blood painted the ground in a varying rainbow; marines seemed to enjoy doing this on a daily basis. As the covenant reached an intersection still being chased by the marauders, the troops ran head first into a pair of derelict cars, the marauder who held the

missile launcher pulled out his TAC pad and keyed in some codes, and the whole intersection was engulfed in flames as the troops were blown to shreds.

The elite commander crawled away having half his right calf blow off by shrapnel, he was bleeding profusely, he could see that there was no way to win this, the UCAF, damned hell bringers were devastating, even to covenant standards, he watched as a figure made its way to him. It held a slender shape of a sword, but its width was wrong, the blade began to roar, the elite commander knew what that was.

As soon as he saw the glimmering chain blades, he could only smile and say.

>"An enemy as terrible is always better as an ally" <p>

His head was lopped off in a moment along with half his body

The marauder looked at the corpse and said.

>"Junction 33 secured orders?" <p>

"Bring the squad over here, fire team Delta and Omega are having difficulties with some bug problems, make sure to bring the heat." The colonel ordered.

"Yes sir."

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AN: Here are a few things you should probably know

This is following one of my Halo/WH40k crossover ideas about the UCAF; the concept is surprisingly similar, just that I have tweaked a few things to the story. The obvious fact is that we don't have space marines, space elves, or space orks, space necrons, pirates, and blue skinned commies.

We will be going through different phases of the war, to which the Normandy crew will meet with very unique members of the UCAF military, and the forces at work. Note to all that the UCAF and Covenant are very different in this

Few notable things, the covenant are engaged with the UCAF most than that of the UNSC, I am not kidding here, the covenant are pouring nearly 1/4th of a million ships to equal the UCAF in head to head space warfare and the UCAF is doing the same. In terms of technology the UCAF uses many things, from Mobile Suits, to armoured prototype suits to advanced exoskeleton armours to advanced reactive plating, and so forth

The covenant are much more of a challenge, much more, people nerf them for whatever reason, but in my eyes, the covenant should never be nerfed, they and the UCAF can equal each other pretty damn well, so you'll see things going left to right and the way in which things turn out over the course of the story. Not to mention how the crew have to face against the most lethal classes of the covenant forces, you'll see when the Juggernauts appear.

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2. Chapter 2

CH2: Gates of Providence

(The idea of this story was to see how much I retained from my last paly through of ME2 I was hoping to cover some of the things I might have forgotten, and also there haven't been many ME2 things I've tried so, just skip past some other stuff and shove it all together now. Don't worry, about the other stories I've either held them back for now, until I get to work properly on them again in another 2 months, seriously I can't get back to them until November, and I've got a lot of paper work to get done for my government things by October.)

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/Normandy SR2/

/Date: Unknown/

/Location: Unknown/

EDI had finished compiling the data required for the trace of the signal, the AM and FM were produced through a sub-space transmissions originating approximately 12 light years from their position, from the degradation of the signal it had been sent about 2 weeks ago. This made things a bit easier to deal with, the ship could reach the system within the day, and she took the approximation and added it to the sensor logs.

EDI contacted the commander over the intercom. "Commander, I have located the source of transmissions."

In minutes the commander appeared from her room, she appeared shortly in the CIC.

>"EDI, you've located the source?"<p>

EDI replied accordingly. "Yes commander, the location of signals originated 12 light years within a system, it suggests that this civilisation possesses faster than light transmission means, I have intercepted a dozen signals, most have degraded, however all suggest that there is life or intelligence within the system."

Joker commented.

>"Great, now we can go meet the natives, think they have bunnies? You know apart from their advanced weapons and plasma cannons and other weapons of planetary destruction why not bunnies?"<p>

Shepard ignored him for now.

>"Okay, there are no other sources of signals anywhere else?"<p>

"None that I can locate." EDI replied.

"Well we don't have many other options, Joker, get us there, activate stealth systems once we exit I want to keep a close eye on things. No need to startle the locals, if they're friendly." She ordered.

"Understood Commander, we shall be arriving at our destination in 12

hours." EDI replied.

With that Shepard left to see the rest of the crew, they had probably a lot to talk about, especially Mordin, who hadn't left his lab since they arrived, he was busy tinkering with his tools to figure out how to get them back, or so he stated. Shepard had a feeling that their resident scientist was still holding a few details back.

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Mordin never had felt such fear in a long time, the trauma was still there, the battle, he could remember every detail of the battle; it had been the worst thing to have ever happen. Especially after the STG was ordered to keep things so quiet, the rest of the galaxy didn't need to know about the rift, it was dangerous enough with the covenant. His own fear from this trauma seemed to have left a greater impact than he thought if he was distracting himself on the thought.

He stopped working at his console as he had wrote all that he had been thinking about the events, he quickly wiped the words clean, he didn't need to start this again. It was then that the lab doors opened. Shepard entered and said. "How are you Mordin?"

"Ah, feeling well, curious, where we might be heading?" Mordin asked.

Shepard replied calmly.

>"We're heading to a system nearby, but I've ordered EDI to make sure we exit in stealth, whoever might be in that system may not be friendly." Shepard explained.<p>

"Good precaution necessary especially in unknown territory never thought to be here." Mordin said.

"Yes, well I'd like to know about one thing professor?" Shepard asked.

"What might you need to know Shepard?" The salarian asked.

"How much do you know about this universe?" She asked.

Mordin knew that question would come up sooner or later.

>"Not much, just those humans here not very hospitable with aliens, contact is near xenophobic, possibly due to constant war with alien races. Their attitudes have been varying as far as STG had been able to understand."<p>

"And who might these aliens be that they're trying to win against?" Shepard asked.

Mordin looked around uneasy about what he was about to say, there were many things he didn't wish to talk about when things had happened. "The covenant, little to know, religious homogeny, very powerful, covenant attempted to commit genocide still in process of doing so, either than that never knew more."

"So then how about the humans, are they anything like the covenant?" Shepard asked.

"Not that I have been able to observe, little to understand or acknowledge, most humans have been so engrossed in conflicts, hard to discern any neutral factions or colonies." He replied.

"So we could be walking into anything from a trap to an agri world?"

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Date: 22/9/2551

Location:

Krugis-

Isethos Port

Marines ran to and fro avoiding the spray of covenant small arms, plasma blasts and lances tore holes into reinforced positions, whole streets remained in pieces, the covenant had countered once more, and they were pushing to take the UCAF starports, however the UCAF had put up a defence to which they weren't going to break as easily. Marauders from the main forces had been called to defend against the onslaught, this time with some help.

The marines fired in constant waves, the first volleys from the rear being the grenade and mortar squads, their launchers ripping into the enemy lines ahead, it was surprising to say the least that the UCAF had managed to fend off an entire covenant assault force on their own, but that was the skill of the marauder class. Their unique skills and attributes were used in unison to challenge the covenant with lethal efficiency and cohesion.

The UCAF redirected their fire upon the covenant advance and then began a retreat under the cover of their artillery; they'd take up to their secondary defences and lure the covenant deeper into their own fire. The covenant happily obliged the UCAF marines, oblivious to the UCAFs ability to counter attack with true blunt force.

Marines in a cul-de-sac fired in rapid bursts to keep their area clear, the main complex behind them was a transit station that led to the star port, and they were determined to hold their defensive position, armed with AR carbines and Vulcan turrets the marines put a wall of continuous fire upon the covenant troops. But still the covenant pushed and the UCAF pushed back.

In this little enclosed wall of troops, the marines battled desperately, one young trooper fired in sporadic bursts with his AR, the rifle kicked back in sharp cracks as it hit its targets. The bullets struck each target in sight with dead accuracy, all died in moments of each other. The marine kept his fire until needler fire came upon him from an enemy sniper nest. The jackal took pot shots at him until it was silenced by a DMR from a marksman in his own hole.

The lieutenant of the platoon yelled.

>"Hold them down marines, don't let these xeno fuckers an inch, they want to die so much then let's oblige them!"<p>

The roar of enthusiasm kicked back into the troops as they ravaged the covenant troops, but in their blood lust for their enemies the covenant began to counter with more advanced troops, they couldn't hold back anymore. The last of their reserves ran in a large wave formation, 200+ running in a tide against the defences. The marines looked onwards at the tide, they knew that this was it; they'd never hold them back with only 25 troops.

But in their defiance their heavy weapons specialist appeared and shifted the massive 50cal Vulcan chain gun at the oncoming wave. As they got closer the Lieutenant yelled into his com.
>"Contact, right on top. Bring down the hammer!"<p>

The covenant never knew what hit them. 6 systematic explosions came from nowhere as the advance was suddenly halted in a haze of blood; one who could see what happened was the lieutenant who had called the support squads into action. The impacts of each position were not that of any known weapon, each was a crater from the impact of individual units.

In the pause from the bloody haze the covenant could finally see their enemy, one that had slain more than any marauder, the elites of the UCAF. Their death masks held on their faces, their helmets black and white, eyes sockets a scarlet red, their shoulder guards, pauldrons with the heads of their slain enemies, the one thing that the covenant dreaded more than the UCAF ODST or Spartans.

The helldivers had arrivedâ€¦|

The commander of the squad moved with inhuman speed, before any of the covenant recovered fast enough, his chain blade sang through the air, it came down in a sharp slice to the side of a zealot class, the elite watched as its blood came from its spilt torso, the blade continued downwards, it was then that the viscera lathered the flood and the helldiver moved to kill the others.

Its squad mates were already tearing into the covenant in merciless droves, using their jetpacks they ran amok upon their enemies dodging and hack and shooting, the covenant bodies dropped faster than they could fire. One helldiver with dual assault carbines brought the underslung chain bayonets down upon the body of another covenant elite, the ultra-class reacted only in time to watch his arms get ripped off, the chain blades came upwards and crossed the neck, in moments the head flew clean off, blood spurting from the stump of the neck.

Another ultra had managed to avoid being killed outright by bringing up its shield gauntlets to deflect the assault, the chain sword grinded furiously like a wolf attempting to get to the neck of its prey. The ultra fended the assault from ripping into it, and knocked the helldiver back, the marine landed on his feet and then rushed again, this time the ultra managing to draw its weapons to face him.

The battle was a bloody one sided massacre, the troops didn't need to a damn thing, the helldivers were hacking them to pieces faster than they could take any kind of shots. The elite commander class attempted to show a brave face running at the helldiver commander. The helldiver commander parried the first set of attacks and began to viscously tear into the elite commander.

Blades classed, the dual energy swords making contact of the dual chain blades of the helldiver, their blades sent sparks in all directions, and anyone could see that there was no lack of illumination from the titans battling each other, both bathed in a halo of light from shields or weapons sparking off. The helldiver broke the deadlock, he kicked up his jetpack and did a summersault landing a blow to the head of the elite commander, then in mid-air twisted his body to a horizontal position and then used his jetpack to tackle the covenant commander.

The two crashed into the ground, the elite clearly being caught off guard by the sheer speed and accuracy of the helldiver's attacks. The two battled on a bit further until the helldiver decided to finish the elite off, in a swipe, the covenant commander missed target and the helldiver drove a hidden wrist blade into the throat of the commander while using his other hand to keep the right arm of the elite from skewering him, it took moments of silence before the elite dropped onto the floor, and then in a sickening crack, the helldiver removed the head from the body of the elite.

In that moment the remaining survivors saw that the battle was beyond hopeless, they began to retreat in fear of the UCAF helldivers, one elite ultra fled as fast his mangled legs could carry him, the hunter class helldiver removed a small 5 inch blade and took aim, the target being 200m from him, he let the elite get a bit further down the road before he threw the blade. His augmented strength and accuracy allowing him to aim the blade just into the elite's spine and heart, the blade travelled the distance and hit its mark, the elite collapsed in seconds; it would bleed to death in a few moments.

Helldivers ensured that all were dead, putting their swords into any survivors and collecting fresh trophies of their enemies, skulls and rank markers, the troops didn't waste any time, the marauders didn't say a thing, they knew each other already, the helldivers were just doing what they were created to do. Once completing their grizzly tradition the troops vanished from sight going off to their next kill, the lieutenant commented with this fact.

"Helldivers are the last thing any living being wished to ever face in life, and the covenant dread their approach for very good reasons. I pray that those who face them to be granted some peace, because they don't show much mercy" | "

Aliens or otherwise didn't deserve to face the helldivers, but still they were necessary, that was a fact of this war, everything is necessary in war.

"Command, area is secure, orders?"

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Upon arriving the Normandy pulled through FTL in a sharp warp of light, it was a few hundred thousand kilometres from the planet in view. The planet was an orange and green world, it had landmarks and an assortment of shapes all grey, the cities below and the cities destroyed. In the CIC the crew gathered in to see what they had found, this wasn't a briefing, but it was necessary for them to know what they had found.

EDI was scanning the area of ships.

>"Commander, I have located what seems to be a dozen vessels on either orbital sides of the planet, one matching sensor readings of the unknown we had encountered at the portal the other is unknown, their shielding seems to deflect scanners. I am picking up life signs on the planet, however they are rapidly vanishing in numbers and being replenished, I have also found traces of ionic composition in the space surrounding the planet, and it seems a large amount had been used in recent days."<p>

Shepard looked at the world below, it looked somewhat like a normal planet, and however the fact that there was so much ash and fire burning in the atmosphere it looked half dead. This world was under attack just as the professor said, the covenant, this war, it was quite real. Mordin had explained a few details, to the best that he could, and he had revealed that the human race was facing extermination on this end of the portal, a war that had costed billions upon billions of lives in nothing short of 26 years, and the UCAF was desperate in defending itself.

She had asked if he knew anything else, but he had been honest that there was nothing else he knew about, the covenant was the only thing that they'd face as a greater threat. But to approach the UCAF would not be easy, the UCAF was desperate to keep anything alien onto their worlds, they had fought desperately for the past 2 and a half decades without pause, they'd have to do something to get their trust though.

Shepard felt like she was restarting from nothing, she had to gain trust from a bunch of xenophobic humans who had been sieged for generations, and meanwhile keep the crew alive as much as possible.

"EDI, can you hail the unknown ships?" Shepard asked.

"I will attempt to, however are you certain to take this course of action?" EDI asked.

"Better now, I got a feeling if we attempted to get planet side we will have more than just a warm welcome, just keep us at a safe distance and contact the ships." She ordered.

"Very well, hailing to unknown vessels." EDI complied.

Joker nervously asked.

>"Shepard you think trying to talk to an alternate universe of people is safe? Come on if the episodes of South Park and any other sci-fi show have stated it's not to talk to the other side they tend to be evil and usually have beards as cool as that might be."<p>

Shepard didn't have time to respond as EDI returned.

>"Communication established, transmission coming through commander."<p>

Shepard introduced herself first.

>"I am Commander Ellen Shepard of the Normandy SR2, who might I be speaking to?"<p>

The transmission came back, a slight amount of static interference in the communication. Whoever spoke back was not however in any good mood. The image became clear with a young man, his clothes looking a tad ruffled, his hair a mess and his eyes glimmering in the holographic representation of whoever he was.

>"This is the UCAF Winchester class frigate Macmillan, the captain of my ship is in emergency care and cannot be present, as well as the fact that most of the command crew are either dead or wounded; all cannot be present at the current moment. I am emergency command AI Lukas 221, Captain Lukas at present moment. I have you on sensors Normandy."<p>

Shepard had not been expecting that, the current officer in command of the fleet was an AI? Shepard looked over to Tali who seemed to be stunned, as well as everyone on the ship. That had never happened before. Shepard decided to re-clarify.

>"Excuse me, did you say you're an AI in command of a fleet?"<p>

The AI sounded a little agitated this time.

>"Yes, what don't you have ears, I have clearly stated that I have command of the fleet currently under emergency status, and I have you on our sensors Normandy. We don't have you on record. And you sure as hell aren't from around here, so what is it?"<p>

Shepard felt as though the AI had more on its plate than EDI would and it sounded like it was annoyed, which raised a few questions in the back of Shepard's mind, she decided to just get to the point before anything happened.

>"We just arrived, is it possible that we are able to offer assistance?"<p>

The AI looked around; it was looking through the ship's internal sensors and cameras. Tali flinched as it turned to face her and the others in the CIC.

>"You are not of UCAF or any known force of the colonies; I have never seen anything like your crewmates or the AI aboard your ship. As a matter of fact I can see your ship about 200,000km away from visual range hidden around the far side of our moon, which makes me wonder why that might be. But from what I've just seen hereâ€¦ you have my expressed permission to come to the fleet. Keep your shields up though, and dock at the set coordinates I'll give you."<p>

In moments the AI projection vanished and was replaced by a docking coordinates to the fleet in orbit over the planet. Shepard looked around and asked.

>"Did that just really happen?"<p>

Mordin commented.

>"Curious, AI in command of fleets, council would never permit even creation; humans here must be lenient to their creations."<p>

Legion was also present and agreed.

>"Consensus, it is possible that humans here may concede to bring harmony to their creations in order to utilise full use, or creations capable of understanding and contemplating the human psyche."<p>

"Well whatever it is those fools are idiots, letting AI control a whole fleet? What are they thinking; the chances are that they'll

back stab them as soon as they turn a blind eye!" Tali stated in hysteria.

Shepard tried to calm her. "Tali, if that AI wanted to betray us or its creators it would have not even bothered to answer us, or even tell us what had happened. Sure it sounded annoyed, but that might just be in its programming, it didn't sound like it was going crazy."

"You don't know thatâ€¦!" She started.

"Tali you don't know that either." Garrus interrupted.

She paused, Garrus was right, she couldn't tell what the AI was doing or thinking, she couldn't just jump to conclusions, but this seemed rather unsafe, the AI had emotions, and had an attitude, how did this UCAF build AI? Shepard tried to allay her fears by asking EDI.

>"EDI, did you find anything about the AI when it was transmitting?"<p>

EDI appeared and replied.

>"Nothing commander, it did not show any symptoms of aggressive tendencies or any show of insanity, it seemed taxed to dealing with its situation, just like how humans possess stress this AI is attempting to command a force of thousands while commanding its fleets in orbit, it may just be agitated."<p>

"We agree, the AI does seem to show some sense of agitation much to that of organics, it does not show any signs of mental instability, however we would require more data before coming to a full conclusion as to this phenomenon." Legion concurred.

"Well then at least we'll figure this out once we reach the fleet, Joker get us there, Tali, Legion, and Kasumi report to the hatch once you've gotten your gear, the rest of you are on standby, I don't know what might be going on, but we should be prepared in case of anything." Shepard ordered.

They all agreed, and proceeded to getting to their stations and to gather their gear, Shepard eyed Tali very carefully as she headed off to get her things, Shepard was worried about the situation, the AI was something that didn't sit right, she knew that it was about her people, their reliance on the geth in the past and how that turned out. But this AI didn't seem to be like them, and EDI and Legion had managed to agree it wasn't likely to attack them unless they did.

Shepard just hoped nothing would go wrong when they got to the fleet.

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Time passed quickly as the Normandy arrived to the fleet; it was in a stable orbit with a dozen vessels present, and a number of hull fragments and destroyed remains of other ships. A large orbital dock was there with most of the ships surrounding it, as soon as the Normandy arrived in range, they were greeted by dozens of small and very fast escort fighters and fighter bombers.

They were guided towards a single dock which looked large enough to fit 3 dreadnought classes inside, the dock was packed with the ruined hulks of 8 ships, or what should have been 6, they docked on an unoccupied pier which clamped on gently, at the hatch the team was gathered, Shepard had no idea who or what to face, she did want to leave a good impression on the UCAF by bringing only her needed weapons, along with Tali, Legion and Kasumi.

When the hatch opened, they flinched, lights blinded them.
>"Hold still, scanning your bio signs and sterilising chamber." An autonomous voice said.<p>

Once the lights finished they were greeted by 6 armed troopers, their grey armour with vacuum sealed helmets gazing left to right, they stood aside as another person arrived. It was the AI, but it looked like a real person, it looked exactly as it did in the transmission but with silver whitish eyes.
>"Greetings commander Shepard, welcome aboard Libra of Hell. I am Lukas 221 acting Captain of the UCAF fleet."<p>

The person held his hand out for a handshake to which Shepard obliged the offer; the hand was solid and real. Shepard looked somewhat surprised.
>"How am I?"<p>

"How am I a solid person? I am an android as much as I am an AI commander Shepard, I work in many ways, now come along, we have much to discuss, you can keep your weapons on you, and I doubt that you could do much indoors anyway." He gestured to the hallway.

Shepard followed Lukas along with her team, they looked around a bit uncertain, this was a new thing, Legion was piqued by interest as his face plates changed to curiosity. As they followed on with Lukas they were swimming in questions as to what was going on. As they walked Shepard asked.
>"I thought you were an AI? How is it possible that you managed to become an android in moments?"<p>

"I have a super luminal chip the size of a thumb, it can be removed and implanted within any UCAF technology capable of accepting me, and also I do not require to be in software form all the time, I have this body due to my combat status within the UCAF military, I am an active captain, but I am usually with a senior admiral to offer tactical advice or I am training new officers who require supervision. However with the fact that I am the only fully senior officer left alive in the fleet who isn't incapacitated or dead, the duty fell upon me to defend Krugis at all cost."

Shepard was surprised; no HSA officer would think about using a VI to do their job, this AI was damned impressive that was for sure. Lukas looked at them while they walked, Tali turned away as he looked at her and Kasumi just looked at him back. He did look at Legion and then ask.
>"You are an advanced platform as I can see, strange that you have a hole in your chest and an arm missing, but accidents happen I suppose. You seem to be lacking a proper shell though."<p>

"Curious, what would you refer to our existence as a shell?" Legion asked.

"Your body doesn't really do you justice, and if what you just said was right, then there are more than one platform within your unit, interesting, the last person to have more than one unit was Agent Maim, and he went insane from over exposure to multiple AI, they saved his life of course, but his whole mind was constantly changing Bipolar to the worst of all of it. He's dead now though, but still interesting." Lukas said as they walked to a lift.

Once aboard the lift Lukas set them to his office.

>"I am following procedures to discuss with you in private; I have ordered my troops to remain passive, which is why they don't start shooting at you almost on sight. They know better than that, they show good amount of restraint and obedience, that is the way that they train us, or how I train them, the need to show control. But yes, there are a few who might decide to put a bullet in your head, which is why I didn't ask you to disarm." Lukas explained.<p>

Shepard was a little nervous.

>"Why would they attack us?"<p>

"Most of the troops here have been fighting on Krugis for the past 2 months commander, they are less than tolerable of any extra-terrestrial so I have made sure that we avoid any critical junctions with many personnel, no one likes to see anything besides each other at this point in time, especially with evacuations still proceeding as slowly." Lukas sighed.

"The war is taking a toll on the human race commander, and it seems that your arrival is making my subordinates edgy. They don't like unknown vessels appearing from nowhere, and I had to convince them not to start launching MAC rounds into your hull as soon as we had you on our sensors." Lukas continued, his tone changed with a bit of exhaustion.

Tali, was baffled.

>"How did you manage to get us on sensors, the Normandy is the most advanced stealth ship the alliance and council navy."<p>

Lukas looked at her slightly bemused and confused.

>"Well let's see, you do realise that our adverts picked your quantum scent as soon as you appeared and the entire fleet has subspace pulse emitters, they can ping anything from a bit of space dust to a whole cruiser in FTL. The covenant ships are the only ones that can hide from us, but they can't hide for long, we usually track them down over a length of time, but yes, your ship's ability to hide hasn't been the best we've seen." Lukas explained.<p>

Kasumi, whispered. "I wouldn't mind testing out their sensors inside."

She was answered by Lukas.

>"You wouldn't get very far you know. And also don't whisper in my presence everyone on the station and my ship knows better than that, I can hear them, unless its private or something I shouldn't be allowed to hear then I will ignore. But idle chatter I pick up on quite easily."<p>

Kasumi shut up almost immediately and made a mental note of his advice. Tali, wasn't exactly pleased about any of this. "So you say

that your commanding officers were all killed and wounded, are we able to see them any time soon?"

"Not now, they're still in surgery, the Admiral and the other captain requires extensive burn treatment and full skin grafting while others require medical treatment from falling debris to being stuck by stray fire." He replied.

"Are you sure that's what happened?" Tali said.

Shepard knew that this wasn't going well, Tali's apprehension to the android officer was not welcoming and it was making her nervous that she might try something that the UCAF would surely attack or apprehend them for. Lukas looked at her with a not so bemused look on his face, he was trying to stave off his agitation by allowing other emotional centres work to aid him, but this damned alien was really pushing his buttons.

>"Are you implying something young one?" He said as though he was talking to a child.<p>

"Not that I know of, but it seems rather suspicious that the whole command crew is now dead and wounded with only you left." She said.

"The commanding position can be acquired by others, however most of them are on the ground and most of the others don't know enough about tactics for full fleet formations enough to safely counter any further attacks from the covenant. So if you can find someone with damned good naval skills in commanding a whole fleet, be my guest." He retorted.

Tali decided that an annoyed android would not make for such a good person to be talking to at this moment in time. Shepard changed the subject.

>"Well I think we should be glad to hear that at least your capable of defending this world, and at least capable of listening to us right?"<p>

"Sure, why not, aliens or otherwise the UCAF wouldn't have me shot, I'm just too damn good of a captain and officer, to which I would like to have you explain how you might have gotten here and a background story, I'll have an adept keep an eye on you while you do that, we will confirm with the rest of your squad and then me and the remaining officers will decide what best course of action would be necessary. Either than that, welcome to my office." Luke opened the door to reveal a large cavernous room stretching over the equivalent size of the Normandy itself.

"This is your office?" Shepard said.

"Yes, however I really don't like the décor or the old fireplace, the room would be better with a large internal display, but the wall one should do fine. This room was the admirals of course; however he isn't going to be back any time soon." Lukas finished.

"Isn't this a little overindulgent?" Shepard asked.

"Not really, the admiral always shared a room with me; I was her brother you know." Lukas replied nonchalantly.

They looked at him a bit puzzled.

>"You were her brother, and the admiral is a female officer?"<p>

"Yes, which is the reason why I take offence to those who have something against her while in my presence." He eyed Tali with a sense of animosity.

"But I learnt that anger does not suit one who should be here to help all, even if they might have something to say to my sister, in front or behind her." Lukas finished.

"Intriguing, concept of family implanted within memories, attitudes and morals intertwined and conflictive, do you not suffer paradoxes within your programming?" Legion asked.

"No not really, my mind doesn't respond to paradoxes, we just forgo the whole thing and take a blind leap, that's my speciality, to take the necessary risks in operations even if it means to sacrifice others to accomplish those goals. But I will seek alternatives as much as I can, before attempting otherwise." He replied.

They reached the desk of the room and Lukas began to sort through some pads with more information on current situations on the ground and in space. He didn't look to happy and was furrowing his brow in concentration.

"So you're capable of thinking for yourself, looking after for everyone else, caring for those who happened to be family from your past, and being able to command an entire fleet if necessary?" Tali summarised.

"Yes." Lukas stated.

Shepard simply watched with utter amazement, if AI here could be so human like, then what were the humans like?

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Shepard was interviewed later by a person called an adept, it seemed as though they were psychic users, which meant that they could do more than just alter mass effect fields, and they could do a lot more. The UCAF refused to explain what an adept was besides psychic, or something similar. But the adepts had also been known to be able to read people's minds from a distance, which made them perfect for the interview, because it lasted 10 seconds, to which Shepard felt a little light headed.

Tali and Kasumi went under the same treatments, and nothing too private was revealed, they just needed to basic facts, Shepard felt though that the adept had seen something more because he asked about the reapers and Shepard clarified about them. The adept had begun to discuss about the finer details about what had happened and was buzzing in and around.

Shepard waited to the end, after all theirs, Legion was shown to a tech adept, a machine like adept with mechanical implants all over his body, he even had an extra pair of working arms. From what legion explained after the whole thing, the process was simple, they exchanged data, with Legion learning about emotions and subroutine

functions of how an AI could learn emotions, and Legion had of course discussed this with the team.

"You want us to help you integrate emotions into your primary functions?" Shepard repeated in disbelief, she couldn't imagine a Legion with emotions.

"Yes, that is what we have come to consensus upon, the ability to understand emotions would be preferable, this may extricate a further understanding of the organic mind and reveal many things to us." Legion replied.

Tali decided to pick up on this.

>"Legion, that doesn't sound to safe, from what the UCAF had warned you, you need a neural processor and a lot of bio reactive systems that the UCAF only possess, if you undertook this without the necessary technology, they said that you'd suffer a catastrophic meltdown and die."<p>

"This is why we have requested your assistance Creator Zorah. This ability to understand emotions would be a great leap in our evolutionary state, and as it is developed for platforms in mind of design, it will be of great improvement." Legion stated.

"Legion, I don't think the other platforms would agree too much on this." Shepard said with concern.

"You are correct; consensus was appropriated by 56%, other programs distributed that attempting such procedure would damage this platform." Legion explained.

"Maybe we should hold off on that idea for a bit, I don't think having legion active with emotions any time soon is a good idea, especially if he's our tech and weapons expert." Kasumi said.

"Agreed, I think we should hold onto that for a week or so, besides we don't exactly have the luxury of time, Lukas said that the commanders would make their decision once they agreed on appropriate actions to deal with us. Even though I doubt I liked that last part." Shepard said.

It was then that the room opened up, Lukas stepped in, before anyone could say anything he stated.

>"The commanders were hard pressed to allow you to remain here; one even suggested sending you off into a mining system 40 light years away. But I convinced them enough for a unanimous decision to allow you to remain with the fleet. Only because the ONI spooks would have my head if we chased you off, and also because I've just got word that our covenant friends are about to make a move very soon."<p>

Shepard asked. "How soon?"

Alarms started to blare over the station, and alert messages came over the PA.

>"Alert, enemy formation on approach, all personnel to combat stations, external rigs prepare for MS launch. Zeta, Gamma, Delta prepare to sortie!"<p>

Lukas let the out of the room.

>"You need to get back to your ship as soon as possible, the covenant are going to be here in force, and also this would be the best time to show your reliability to us, if you want our trust, you'll need to earn it from the troops not me."<p>

"What about the colony?" Shepard asked.

"You decide, we aren't going to stop you, but the troops have everything under control, as of now, but once the battle gets under way, that depends. You can go if you want, just give us your IFF to match so the ground defences don't blow you out of the sky." Lukas headed to a lift.

Hitting the switch to get to the hangar they appeared there hundreds of personnel were busy boarding their vessels, ships were launching and massive bipedal machines were rigged up. Shepard and the others looked at them with surprise.

>"What the heck are those?" Kasumi asked.<p>

"Mobile suits, more specifically they're the E-15 Zodiac class along with the 3GXR Spartan class, they've got to deal with the incoming enemy forces, and they'll support you just as long as you don't get in their way. I've got to get back to my frigate, see you on the field."

Lukas headed to a ship in the docks, Shepard didn't know what to make of the UCAF, it seemed extremely capable and very unique, and a very good guess would be that the UCAF had more advances in tech than that of the HSA. Shepard led the team back to their dock; the marines there let them through quickly as possible.

As soon as they got in they were greeted by Garrus.

>"So I guess from the alarms outside and the message to get out of dock ASAP that the unknown aliens had returned?"<p>

"Yes, but at least we have the UCAFs attention, I just met their Captain, he's definitely an AI and a very capable one, he's given us a chance to help out, but he warns us to avoid going planet side for a while. Anything happen while we were gone?" Shepard asked.

Miranda replied.

>"Nothing commander, we just ran some scans, so far we've found little of interest, either than their ships, but nothing much."<p>

"Good, Joker, we need to get going. From what their AI captain said the enemy fleet is going to be coming for the station soon and if it gets hit, they aren't going to make an SR3 any time soon." Shepard said.

"On it commander, just need to wait for the damn light, by the way what the hell are those mechs?" He said pointing to the MS units that Lukas explained.

"They're our support, so be careful about them, they don't like anyone getting in their way especially with the enemy forces." Shepard replied.

Thane asked.

>"I presume we have their trust for the defence of the station?"<p>

"Pretty much, but if we screw up they can't help us."

"Good thing we don't need to worry about that." Zaeed commented.

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As soon as the MS units launched, the Normandy came up behind, its engines were at maximum, it joined up with the whole fleet of ships, there were 12, 3 more from the dock had arrived, and there was one that looked much like a rifle. The largest ship was a 5.5km ship, Shepard couldn't imagine where the UCAF could have gotten such resources to fund this war, but was she glad that there was something friendly that was that size.

The Normandy stayed in close proximity to the large ship which hailed them.

>"This is November Skies; this is captain Lukas 221 to Normandy."<p>

Shepard got onto the coms.

>"I hear you Captain."<p>

"Good, because we only have a few minutes, I have reports of the covenant's first waves, you'll be fine with us for that moment, however when the second waves arrive, break away from us immediately, the covenant pulse fire will rip your ship to pieces if it gets caught in the crossfire, just follow the MS squadrons when you break off, they'll guide you through the battle, just don't follow the elite units, the Zeta and Gamma squads have the important role of dealing with heavier enemy concentrations which would be highly in advisable." Lukas warned them.

"Okay what do you need us to do?" Shepard asked.

"Just do whatever you can, but with a ship your size, it won't last against any of the stronger classes, or any of the enemy suits, just keep a sharp eye out for them, either than that the MS teams will point you in the right direction." He replied.

The coms finished after, Joker stated.

>"Wow, for a battle, sitting on the sidelines for the duration doesn't seem like we could possibly gain much support."<p>

Shepard thought it through, Joker was right, but this was the Captain of the fleet, and he did warn her about the UCAF commanders, they didn't want her around as much, they might use them breaking off as an excuse. That was if they happened to be that callous to the crew and her, but she had seen nothing from Lukas to indicate that much.

>"Joker just stick to our orders, I think they're simple enough, besides, we have no idea how powerful the covenant are."<p>

Mordin knew, but Shepard promised that she'd never speak about it to the crew, unless it was absolutely necessary. At this point she did, but just kept it to herself, she just wanted to make sure that they didn't panic; they just needed to follow the orders and keep away

from anything that might make mincemeat of the Normandy.

EDI reported.

>"Enemy formations in visible range now."<p>

The display showed 18 ships, all of varying sizes, she could see that the size of each must be massive because the magnification was up at 60 times normal, this fleet was large. The first thing she saw though was not the organic shapes of the ships shimmering in the light of the planet's horizon, it was the fact that the fleet had moving away at fast speeds, they left to head in this direction.

"Unknown contacts on approach, over 150 moving to engage the fleet, some are humanoid in shape others vary in design, possibly fighter craft." EDI analysed.

It was then that she saw the MS units of Zeta, Gamma and Delta leave, the strange humanoid suits seemed to have a lot of engines and thrusters attached, but their size and speed was amazing, they zipped away into the distance faster than any fighter that Shepard had ever seen. The Normandy kept sensors watching over them as they engaged.

The darkness of space was suddenly illuminated as explosions pocketed the whole void, lights shifted endlessly, it was like watching a fireworks display. EDI got the cameras to watch the progress of the battle, it was an astounding thing. Humanoid suits clashing in space, weapons firing off in rapid bursts, energy weapons of multiple designs being used, others had chemical rifles or what looked like large variations of AR weapons with Mass Accelerators installed.

EDI then warned.

>"Enemy forces have broken through, I detect many are fighters, some humanoid suits are rapidly on approach, I advise we take immediate action."<p>

"Joker, get us clear." Shepard ordered.

The Normandy moved slightly away from the side of the November to join up with the MS units it was assigned to, the suits made way as they approached, the head suit radioed in.

>"Hey FNGs, we meant that you don't move until the second wave, these small fries are ours, but if you insist, whatever you do don't chase after them, or they'll gut your ship." The pilot warned.<p>

Joker mumbled something about the suit pilots under his breath and waited as the first waves arrived. The attack was something Shepard found very intriguing and very stunning; the suits released external packs from themselves and launched them at the ship. The defensive systems reacted immediately, the lasers removed a few incoming improvised missiles, but the rest struck hard, the ship was rocked by half a dozen impacts.

"Jesus, what the hell do these bastards carry, mini nukes?" Zaeed yelled.

"Probably." Garrus said getting to his feet.

Joker began to pull the Normandy around. That was the first time that they had ever encountered that kind of attack. Point defences reacted

to strike the suits in the area surrounding them, lasers had some difficulties though, the enemy suits reacted fast and sporadically to avoid strikes which worked well for them, the tactic threw off the defences of the lasers, some suits even managed to land their attacks on the hull.

Joker swore.

>"Son of a bitch, these guys are fast. EDI watch our aft, they might come around to take out the engines."<p>

EDI replied to confirm, but then she alerted.

>"Enemy suit on approach to strike bow."<p>

The ship shook at a direct hit landed on the front of the ship and scattered around the hull, the suit appeared in the front of the display and looked at them. Its weapon was pointed in a flash, Joker only swore.

>"What the-."<p>

(Yay, this new story is going to incorporate a number of things, such as MS Gundam elements and a few other things, don't worry, the whole story isn't going to be about Mechs, this chapter and next were really it, and for the most part space engagements will be pretty solid.

I've got to start working on other ideas right now, by the way, anyone think I should add anything else into this? I mean let's see, I've got, Gundam, Macross Frontier, and a few other things added inâ€|

You know what, I'll just work with whatever I have, hope you guys like this.

I really felt as though I could have done better with introducing Lukas and the others, but I don't want anything solid with the UCAF marines, just yet. The Navy I'll let happen, I won't expect you guys to know all the details of the UCAF so don't worry, that's why I'm trying to explain things bit by bit over the length of the story, you'll get a more in depth understanding as we go on, so don't ask about the suspense part.

Oh yeah I just wanted to ask, what kind of MS or Gundam do you think we might want to base some of the UCAF suits on? No beam spamming, we have assault rifles and gauss guns, and a lot of missiles, not lasers or beam weapons, well not many energy based weapons. I don't like beam spamming much.

So throw in some suggestions here and thereâ€|)

3. Chapter 3

CH3: Purpose of warâ€|

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The enemy suit was struck from the side, its weapon discharging in a different direction, a human suit appeared and radioed.

>"This is why you need to follow us!"<p>

The battle rushed back to the Normandy, Shepard held herself as another explosion rocked the CIC, she couldn't imagine what the covenant could possibly dish out, but it was causing a lot of damage, she could only imagine what Tali would say once she learnt about the ablative armor being torn over the length of the hull. Shepard pulled herself over to the cockpit; Joker was having a hard time trying to get them back under the cover of the November.

They just avoided another strike when they reached the stern, it was then that the second wave came in, and it was then that they saw the escorts motioning for them to follow. Joker decided to listen to their advice this time; he gripped his face in concentration as he tried to avoid any more strikes from enemy fire.

The Normandy made its way away from the November as a wave of plasma arrived, it was then hundreds of missiles catapulted away, the void surrounding the ship was soon packed with explosions. Shepard could see why the AI captain had warned them not to stay close to the ship and the fleet. The Normandy followed the UCAF MS teams as they moved away from the fleet, they headed to engage the enemy ships, and Joker took evasive manoeuvres as energy fire was directed at them.

They chased after the UCAF MS units; they covered the Normandy from enemy fire and kept their enemies from ripping into the small ship. EDI reported.

>"A significant number of hostiles have engaged with the UCAF fleet, we have a portion pursuing, I have attempted to use point defences, however they possess energy shielding, and it has been very difficult to strike any of the hostiles."<p>

Shepard replied. "I wouldn't be so surprised, from what their captain warned me about, the covenant have an equal amount of technology comparable to their own, the only difference being their main ships. Get us in close to those suits, make sure we stay with their leader, he'll guide us through, and leave the enemy suits to the UCAF pilots."

Shepard called Garrus. "Garrus, how long until we have the Thanix ready to fire?"

"Not long, we just need to get into firing range, and then I'll do the rest." Garrus reported.

"Good, we'll be in range soon enough." Shepard replied.

The Normandy sped through the void between the UCAF fleet and the covenant forces, it was a dangerous run considering only the smallest UCAF ships were usually sent and not whole Aires sized assault gunships, the Normandy was an obvious target, if not hard to hit, a few stray rounds struck onto the armour but not enough to destroy the plating. The Normandy was made with energy weapons in mind along with speed; the ship dodged most of the incoming fire from time to time.

Jeff kept them ahead of plasma blasts, but the UCAF MS squad dealt with them by deploying ion canisters to detonate them, Normandy could be thankful for that. As they reached the head of the covenant fleet formation, they could see the immense size of the ships, they didn't look as small as they did now, a few number of ships looked large enough to equal the size of one wing of the whole citadel.

Shepard knew that this wasn't going to be as easy to fire on something that was more far larger than that of a collector's cruiser. Jeff grunted out.

>"You have got to be shitting me, how large do these guys make their ships? Fuck they have to be compensating for something."<p>

"Jeff, just get us in range of the smallest one you can find and tell the suits that we're heading to it." Shepard ordered.

"Fine, but I don't know about what you mean by small." Jeff replied a little nervous.

The MS squad acknowledged their target and sent them their targets, a 1km ship that was a covenant corvette, or they could take on a 2.4km covenant CCS destroyer. Shepard did not like either one, but seeing as they had little choice.

>"Joker, target the corvette, at least we'll last longer than that destroyer."<p>

Jacob commented.

>"Let's just hope our guns can last against that thing."<p>

Jeff concentrated and pulled the ship into a corkscrew above the covenant corvette, they raced towards it with the UCAF suits engaging the enemies defending it, the suits fired streams of rail rounds and HEAT missiles, but still the sheer amount of fire being directed at the Normandy was nothing short of overwhelming. They managed to get into a good position, Joker yelled.

>"Here's too crazy as shit missions!"<p>

A massive blast came from the main guns of the Normandy, the high powered Thanix cannons drew out a brilliant blue lance as it struck home, but the beam however met its end as it hit a large barrier. An energy shield protected the corvette. It didn't last long though, the shields only held up for moments before the beam began to cut into the hull, the stall by the shields had bought the corvette time to save itself, the molten super-heated metal beam stopped before it could do anymore damage.

Needless to say the corvette was crippled, the ship drifted away from them, but the enemies in the region began to target the Normandy with a priority. Shepard was a little surprised that the ship had survived the onslaught, and on top of which had resulted in the Normandy becoming a very large target. Shepard yelled out.

>"Joker, get us clear of here."<p>

"I'm on it, but I don't think those guys want us to." He replied.

The MS squad was suddenly fending off a whole stack of banshee fighters and concentrated pulse fire, the covenant had been surprised, but now they were just plain pissed. The Normandy was disrupting their focus from the UCAF fleet, and they were determined to make the Normandy either ionised pieces of space dust or molten slag, neither of which appealed to the commander.

The destroyer that they had the option of destroying was hot on their tail, it was surprisingly fast for such a large ship, plasma torpedoes and pulse lasers narrowly missed the Normandy on a number

of occasions, EDI was trying to keep them ahead of the lethal enemy fire. It was then that one of their escorts was hit by an incoming plasma torpedo, his MS exploded nearby. The reactor detonation shook the ship, Shepard felt bad that the pilots were trying to defend the ship; they were throwing themselves in front of enemy fire.

"Damn, they're dedicated." Jacob said with a bit of pride.

"You should know." Shepard replied.

The Normandy was making its way back as the fleet began to cover them, three sharp flashes of light rocked by, each round made contact with the covenant destroyer, the ship was illuminated by each impact, each round destroyed a section of the ship, and then one round hit the bridge, the whole ship slowed as the ship slowly detonated under fire. The covenant fleet was withdrawing; their numbers had been ripped to pieces. Only a few that remained active fled into slip-space, others that remained were pulverised by the UCAF fleet.

The Normandy reached the Libra of Hell once more, its holds were packed with more damaged ships, but this time there were medical teams and fire squads dealing with vessels, hundreds were being shipped away, others dying in stretchers, and some dying in the arms of fellow marines and medics. The whole scene below shook the commander, it made her feel that there was more to these troops, she hadn't had time to think it through as they reached the dock, the MS team had landed elsewhere.

Shepard called up Legion and Tali without Kasumi, they needed to see the captain, from what the situation was outside, they could only guess that the UCAF fleet held, but not without taking casualties themselves. They were greeted by one marine, his armour was bloody, his helmet looked askew, he saluted and gestured them out. Shepard walked into the dock, it was no longer a dull grey room, it was messy, and the other marine that had been present was bleeding profusely on the ground nearby, a medic was tending to him, a dead alien lay nearby in a pool of its own blood.

The air smelt of ozone and blood, the station had been attacked, which would explain why the captain didn't wish for them to remain anywhere nearby. They were directed by no one, Shepard already knew where to go, they took the lift the captain's office, one arrival the room remained absolutely intact, as if the aliens didn't bother to come here at all.

Lukas was sitting in his chair staring at data pads and then glancing to look at them.

>"You have arrived Shepard, I thought you might, you can see why the other commanders would rather not bother with you, or why anyone would care? Our troops are dying in droves and we can't do a damn thing to stop them. The covenant come in numbers that we can barely deal with, a 17 ratio, but even then, there are a number of multiple battles where each is one sided or another. The covenant is smarter than this. And I guess you must know realise how bad it is?"

Shepard remembered how the covenant blocked their attack and how the UCAF pilot threw his suit into intercepting enemy fire to stop them from being gutted. She nodded.

>"I've seen many things captain, and I see that your fight is

desperate."<p>

"Good, because the UCAF is going to withdraw from here, and we like you to help in some evacuation efforts on the planet, the Libra of Hell will be the drop point. The station is going to move as soon as you complete your last pick up from the planet, don't worry about packing your hull, the shuttles just need protection on the ground, once then we'll depart, just get back here once you've completed your task. Afterwards we'll give you a lift to the next colony Callistan, it's not far from here, and you'll be riding inside the Libra." He said.

"I just need to know one thing sir." Shepard asked.

"What might it be?" Lukas replied.

"The UCAF commanders said that they don't trust me, and now you've given me more orders and haven't even mentioned what the others are planning to do." Shepard said.

"The other commanders believe that you would have to be dealt with ONI, Office of Naval Intelligence, our special forces and development faction, secrecy is everything with them. But in recent years the ONI had suffered from internal conflicts, it's a political minefield Shepard which is why I warn you now, don't do anything that would have them from sending you a 21 gun salute into an execution squad. But for now you have my respect but not my trust." Lukas replied.

Shepard nodded and left the room with Tali and Legion. Tali stated.

>"After all that, they still don't trust us?"<p>

"Tali, we cost them a good pilot and didn't even manage to destroy a single enemy ship, we got chased out with our tails between our legs and the covenant was determined to kill us, either than that we didn't do much." Shepard replied to the statement.

Legion agreed. "Organics cannot trust as easily Creator Zorah, on our observation we discovered that this AI officer has had to deal with significant stress, our arrival had also complicated events and the UCAF is unwilling due to a lack of understanding and trust, they cannot trust us until they are otherwise assured that we would not pose a possible threat upon them."

Tali kept quiet as they walked back to the dock, their marine guard was waiting, and it seemed as though there was 3 other personnel, not in marine BDU or uniform, they were wearing strange flight suits. One held his helmet under his arm; it was navy blue and white. He greeted them.

>"So you're Commander Shepard I presume? I'm Carmine, lieutenant of the Gamma squadron; we were protecting you as you attacked and withdrew, you cost me a good friend, but Greg knew the orders, protect and serve. I should tell you that you're to accompany us down to the planet for the evacuation efforts, Isethos Port is our location, do hope you're ready because the whole place is lit up from a number of enemy AA batteries."<p>

Shepard looked at the young pilot he was barely 16 and he was in command of this squadron, he also seemed to welcome Shepard a bit, he

didn't hold anything against her about his fellow pilot. He just looked to herâ€¦ "Yes, we're preparing to go, I was just wondering but shouldn't you be upset about your friend?"

The young man's face changed. "Greg knew the chances of coming back were slim, all of us know the risks changed, all of us have to face death inevitably. Greg will live as long as we do, and we accept that, he's not coming back, but that doesn't mean the end of the world for the rest of us, we still have a purpose commander. Now if you don't mind, I should tell you that we'll be going down on escort duty with you once more, but you might need to arm up, on the ground at the star port, the UCAF have an armoury team, they'll give you whatever you need to help in the defence of the port."

The pilot finished the briefing and took off down another corridor with his fellow pilots, Shepard knew animosity when she saw it, this person was trying to be respectful to her, but he kept his sorrow buckled away so he didn't take it out on her. That kind of emotional control was a surprising trait; she had never seen that in a person before.

"He's very unique." Tali said.

"He doesn't honestly care about us Tali, I can see it in him, he's keeping his anger and emotions in check, and he doesn't want to start trouble, he just accepts it as it comes. I don't know about the rest of his squad though, they just remained behind their helmets." Shepard observed.

"Odd, most organics would attempt to relieve anger on individual who may or may not relate to cause of anger." Legion observed.

"Probably because he knows he'll get into trouble, or that he's more mature than others, he knows that he should be angry, but he'll wait for a chance to relieve that anger later." Shepard replied.

Once they were aboard the ship, Shepard lay in the course for the planet, they'd arrive at the port to help out, and this time she was bringing out everyone. Still though, Shepard felt as though she'd be seeing the lieutenant much sooner than expected. The Normandy took off as soon as they could, the MS escorts followed, their amazing ability was shown as they utilised heat resistant shields to re-enter the planet's atmosphere.

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Arriving at the port the UCAF city, they were greeted by a very bad sight, it reminded Shepard too much like Eden Prime, but this was worse, the whole region had large smoking craters that seemed to be the size of cities, and they probably were. The whole surrounding region had been mostly destroyed, mountains and valleys all gone, the small city now in the centre point of destruction was all that could be seen. Shepard now knew why the surface had an orange tinge in its colour. Half the planet had been destroyed.

The port they landed at had thousands flocking to ships, all heading to the fleet above, Shepard couldn't imagine how the UCAF intended to evacuate so many people, and as a matter of fact she didn't wish to know. If anything about the battle in space showed her, they would willingly sacrifice themselves, but what about the people? Shepard

took her team into the cargo hold; there they were greeted by the ground.

They walked out like a group, what they saw was rather odd, the requisition officer was sitting on a crate looking at them and there was no one else in sight. He said.

>"Glad you could make it to the fight, no one else is stationed here."<p>

Shepard walked up and asked.

>"Where is everyone? I thought we were going to get support?"<p>

"I am your support, and I am the weapons master and your requisitions officer rolled into one." The young teen with the goggles said.

Kasumi joked. "Great now we have a midget to add to the family, we're pretty much complete."

The boy looked at her with a raised brow and said. "Real funny, last time I saw anyone wearing that much black was at a one night stand in the red light centre."

Shepard looked at him and just asked.

>"Look here kid, we were told we'd get to receive some weapons from your captain, and he also said thatâ€¦"<p>

"OH, so you're the crazy human chick with the army of aliens and crap with her, fineâ€¦" He clicked on a button and soon there was a rumbling sound.

A large door opened up, and a large tank that equalled 2 Mako transports arrived. It had a quad mounted turret with external machine guns from what Shepard could see and it had more armour plating than any vehicle she had ever seen in her life. It drove itself next to the young teen and released a side, the folds opened up to reveal a whole stack of armaments and weapons, and equipment and gear.

"Yep, there she is, my Maria, Cougar HPC, one of the few ever used in the field, got all your guns where you need them." The teen said.

Jacob commented. "Kid, you've got more armaments than half of an army."

"I know, but then again, I am the requisition officer and arms master here, and tank and armour support for you, usually I should be serving up some special operatives in the field but we don't have any coming in for today, so you got me. By the way, name's Jordan Hartman." The teen said pulling out some sort of cigarette.

Miranda observed with a keen eye. "You know those will kill you."

"Not these. Lo-Sticks don't possess that lethal crap that they had back when the colonies were first founded; these are just mild sedatives, causes a null in soreness and pain, besides ever try to keep all these guns up to prime condition?" The teen asked no one.

Zaeed was practically raring to go into the armoury.
>"Kid I don't know you, but I honestly couldn't care less, so I'm just gonna take a look at the stuff you've got."<p>

"Knock yourself out, just don't pull the trigger on the bigger things, they have been loaded and I don't want to start cleaning up again." The boy commented as he looked at a data pad.

They crew looked on as Zaeed and Jack ran over to the armoury, it would probably make sense as they were the most addicted the blowing things up, right next to Grunt who just strolled the distance quite quickly. Shepard was rather impressed by the sight of weapons, large racks of weapons stretched over the whole section of the HPC.

Zaeed was looking at one weapon that grabbed his attention, it was a flamethrower or flame wrists, the weapon had been separated into dual gauntlets, there was a set of pipes that connected to a bunch of packs at the end. Zaeed looked at the instructions.

>"Caution Fury Flamers, use only with Redeemer class armour, or non-flammable gloves, weapons should not be test fired in any enclosed spaceâ€¦ reload by pressing B on the back pack remove used canisterâ€¦" He mumbled the rest.<p>

Shepard looked around when Jacob hefted a large gun, one that looked larger than the Grenade launcher back on the ship. He also read the description.

>"M154 Grenade Launcher, multipurpose weapon, 15 shots, reload barrel by pulling back pin, caution, grenade launcher uses multiple variations of munitions do not fire unless absolutely sure of correct type."<p>

Shepard chuckled to herself, why would a grenade launcher need multiple variations of munitions? Shepard walked over to a rack of rifles, there were 4 rows of all differing types, some had bayonets and others had weapon attachments, the top most had been left blank. She checked over to the side where a sign read the description of the rifles.

[AR- M50- Standard UCAF Rifle]

Description: The UCAF AR is the foremost effective weapon ever used; the rifle could load a round of 9mm x 4.5. AR series rifles use modified Mass Driver systems, the magnetic acceleration units should not be touched, as pulse energy can cause severe damage to living tissue. Uses are restricted to only for the UCAF marauder class, Helldiver, Vindicator, Redeemer, Crusader, Liberator, and Devastator class marines.

Shepard looked at the rifles, she looked at the configuration, it had a mass accelerator of types, she wasn't so sure, the UCAF didn't have anything to do with mass effect tech, well maybe their MACs but those guns are massive, she couldn't imagine how long it must have taken to get these rifles out. She looked over to the other weapons; Jack hefted a large pistol with a knife attachment on the end.

Kasumi was looking at some of the equipment, along with Tali. Grunt was trying lifting the largest gun in the room, it was twice his hands size, and the gun had barrels the size of cannons, not to mention it had a very large bayonet. Grunt pulled it up and said.

>"This gun must have been made for someone larger than meâ€| "<p>

"Why do you say that?" Shepard asked.

"Because the gun has a size setting for a person about 9ft tall, his name happens to be Markov." Jordan said as he walked from finally finishing his Lo stick. Shepard asked.

>"Who's Markov?"<p>

Jordan replied. "An old friend, he's well and truly dead, and trust me on this, you can't use that gun and I won't let you try to."

"Why little man, is Markov insulted by those who decide to use this?" Grunt said.

"No, because your arms will get ripped off by the recoil, and the gun isn't meant for your small size." He commented as an insult.

Shepard had seen few, who would openly insult the krogan by doing that, and Grunt usually kills most of them, but it seemed that the armoury master decided to take that challenge to the krogan. Grunt dropped the gun and walked over, Shepard was about to intervene, and so was the crew. But Jordan stopped them.

>"Don't bother, if this big hulking piece of orange crap wants to try to beat me up, he can try to, but he won't get far."<p>

Grunt bent down to stare the Arms Master in the face.

>"Is that a challenge little man?"<p>

"What's it to ya scale face?" The teen smirked.

Shepard watched as the krogan tried to head butt the teen, and she had a feeling she was going to have to clean up a lot of blood and send an apology to the Captain in orbit, but one thing that Grunt should have remembered was that when you face someone, they should not be standing on a slope. Grunt moved forwards and suddenly felt as the air moved around him, he hit the ground down the ramp with a significant amount of force.

Jordan rolled backwards and back to his feet in a crouch, he looked backwards.

>"Don't try to hit me stupid, I ain't one who stands idly for walking tanks like you."<p>

Grunt pulled himself off the ground, he was angry; he had never seen anyone do that before. But it seemed that the little man had more speed and skill than he anticipated, the krogan made another mad dash at the young man. Jordan waited for the krogan to blindly attempt another attack, the right hook he dodged with astounding grace, and then another punch, the krogan roared and then tried to grab Jordan.

The boy jumped over the head of Grunt and then pulled him downwards from behind and rolled the half a ton krogan down the ramp with ease. The boy laughed.

>"Shepard if this is all you've got as a tank, you might as well settle for an old car, he's no challenge for me."<p>

Shepard and the crew were amazed at how the teen was dodging the krogan as though he was nothing, even after he smoked a sedative, how he did that was amazing. Grunt punched forwards and Jordan dodged and kicked the krogan in the face and then knocked the krogan down with his other hand, it was something that none of them had seen.

"You should keep your head straight dumbass, the next time you think about insulting someone who you have no idea about, make sure they aren't stronger." Jordan said to the stunned krogan.

He walked over to his friend's weapon and lifted it with one arm and dropped it back into the shelf spot. Grunt would have taken his chance to attack, but with the child being so damn strong he'd rather not risk it, besides his Krant would not approve if he got beaten up even more, it annoyed him, but he kept his peace.

Jordan walked over to the commander and asked.
>"You ready to get into action?"<p>

XXXXXX

The Cougar HPC was leading the attack with the hammerhead, most of the crew was packed into the HPC, and the hammerhead wasn't made to carry that many people. On the HPC they found that Jordan had more toys than they could imagine whole sets of missiles and ammunition lined the walls in crates, he had told them how to use each weapon, but decided to upload all the instructions by a Nova tool which looked more like an Omni. They had learnt how to use the UCAF weapons in minutes; it was easy, seeing that it had to be used for young troops and for all classes.

Shepard was finding things weren't as simple as it seemed with the UCAF, the young soldiers, the crewmen so young, all pointed to the fact that they were children, or child soldiers. But who would use child soldiers? Shepard felt that she was going to run into the truth very soon, but the fact remained, they had to gain the UCAFs trust in this one.

They reached the front lines, the heavy thuds of artillery and distant gunfire assured them that they were there, Shepard was riding in the hammerhead, and she was making sure that the HPC was covered, Jordan reassured her that it would be safe during an attack unless they decided to 'glass' them. She wasn't sure about the term, but she felt as though she didn't want to know at this point about what the covenant did to whole planets.

The small convoy arrived at a busy road, hundreds of vehicles were going off in all directions, there was an endless tide of people heading to the ports, and shuttles were leaving in regular intervals, the convoy had to pull around the people through another road and then drive all the way through the ruined streets of the city. Smouldering buildings and wrecked vehicles was all that was left in sight, no living soul was in sight, and it put Shepard on edge.

They arrived at their deployment, a company of troops positioned within a cul-de-sac; they had looked relieved when the convoy arrived. Shepard disembarked from the hammerhead with Tali and Garrus, she'd go and see this UCAF officer, but Jordan left his vehicle and stepped ahead of her to talk to the UCAF officer.

"Jordan, I thought you got transferred to the 88th Helldivers didn't you?" The officer greeted.

"Yeah, but I got some news for youâ€|" The officer saw Shepard and the aliens within her crew.

"What's all this about?" The marine asked his old friend.

"Something good, if you consider this good, we've got a situation up stairs and the captain has ordered that someone was to help the commander and her team integrate with us, now I'm not saying that this is something we all want, but it had to be done." Jordan made a quick summary of events to the marine commander.

Shepard and the others were curious as to what was going on, the two UCAF marines talked, Jordan carefully explaining things while his comrade was listening with a lot to think about, he was trying to scrutinize what had just been told to him. After a few minutes they broke away, the commander approaching with some rather apprehensive look on his face.

"Greetings commander Shepard, my fellow officer had just updated me on your objectives, I am Sargent Major Nicholas of the 405th Marauders, we would like to welcome you into our company for now, and we'd like you to get adjusted as soon as possible to our conditions. Now our most important objective would be to hold this position against oncoming enemy waves, they won't be here for another 30 minutes so get prepared, if things get bad, then fall back with Jordan, he'll provide cover for you and the others."

"That's it, what load of pussy shit, you gotta be kidding me." Jack commented.

"Be that as it may stranger. The only reason you're here is to help defend this position, not go and get yourself killed by covenant troops, and trust me on this; you've faced them in space but not on the ground." Nicholas said.

"And what should we expect on the ground?" Jacob asked.

"About more armoured tanks than you could imagine, the covenant have thousands of troops to throw at you, and if you don't expend all your ammo, you'll still have the tougher ones to face." Nicholas replied tersely.

"If they are stronger, the better for me." Grunt stated.

"You know you'll regret saying that when you face their best." Nicholas finished before walking off.

"What assholes." Zaeed said.

"I believe that they have more deep problems than just us, the covenant resulted in all of this, Jordan is also actively apprehensive about helping us, not to mention the sheer number of marines who don't seem to like us. It spans their whole military and public view, we need to be cautious." Ellen Shepard warned her fellow comrades.

Shepard sighed and then decided on a plan of action.

>"Okay, seeing as we can't be trusted with anything more than just defence, I think it's good if we split up into fire teams. I will lead with Garrus, Tali at front, Miranda, Jacob, and Mordin takes the left flank, Zaeed, Grunt and Jack will take right, Legion, Kasumi, Thane and Samara take the middle section. We hold until all UCAF ships can finish evacuations, is that understood?" Shepard clearly stated.<p>

The crew felt the distrust, but at least they weren't getting shot at, they nodded and walked off to wherever they needed to be, Shepard headed over to the front of the battlements of the UCAF positions, Garrus and Tali eyeing their surroundings. The UCAF troops didn't say a word, others looked around then back to their duties, they had work to do. But still there was uncertainty with the UCAF and the Normandy crew.

Shepard bunkered down to a small fire team led by a long black haired teen named Lt Daniel Lazoroski, he was busy cleaning his side arm, and he clipped the barrel back into place as Shepard approached.

>"So, you're the red headed chick with a crew of xenos? Nice to meet you, too bad I can't shake your hand right now; I just need to wait for the wave."<p>

"What?" Garrus said.

"You'll see in about 3, 2, 1!" Daniel reacted fast.

The marine pulled his rifle as 3 explosions sounded nearby; the position was being bombed, plasma mortars hitting right on their heads, the only thing that was stopping them seemed to be a young man with glowing palms, Shepard recognised him as one of the adepts that Lukas spoke about, psychic operatives with technological amplifiers. He had put a shield over their heads to ensure that they were struck by incoming fire.

Daniel fired off at the distance with his pistol.

>"Hey commander, if you're finished day dreaming, you might want to use that rifle on your person to add to the firepower, because we have a lot of shit incoming!"<p>

Shepard obliged the marine, she removed her Mattock assault rifle and took aim, she didn't trust the UCAF weaponry enough to use it, nor did her fellow crew mates, they just took a few other things to add to their firepower than actually use any of the UCAF weapons. What could the difference possibly be?

As the Normandy teams fired outwards at the enemy troops, they received a warm reply; green blasts pelted the surrounding area and were quickly followed up by large explosions of plasma grenades and launchers. Shepard fired on the first thing that she could see, an alien with a shield, but her fire wasn't able to punch through the shield, and whenever one seemed to glow another shield bearer replaced the other, they were being smart.

Daniel on the other hand told her a handy tip as he fired.

>"Aim for the hands of the jackal and then they'll be stunned, kill them then."<p>

Shepard listened and then did as he advised, she fired at the hand of where the jackal was firing and the creature screamed and she put a round through its skull, but that was just one and there were another 39 more to go. Daniel then yelled out to the forward lines.
>"Rear volley! Fire at 200, HE and follow up with second, on my mark!"<p>

As the enemy formation reached his visor counter of 200m, Daniel yelled.
>"Fire!"<p>

The first HE rounds from the underslung launchers of the UCAF rifles let loose hell, the covenant approach was engulfed in bloody mist as the formation was ripped apart, they were quickly followed by the second volley which Daniel also ordered.
>"Fire!"<p>

The rest of the formation was butchered in moments and the covenant began to scatter, but that didn't mean that this was over. Shepard looked to see that the formation was gone, but it was now replaced by another one, this time moving in to close the distance. They were agile creatures much like the beings that Daniel called jackals.

"Damn, we've got skirmishers! Cover the roofs; the frontal assault is a bluff!" Daniel yelled.

The teams did so quickly only the foremost troops opened fire while others watched the roof tops, it was then that a whole group of skirmishers appeared, firing down as they jumped the distance to the troops. Jack, Miranda, Thane and Samara let their biotics take control, the skirmishers going down were suddenly torn to pieces by the impacts or were thrown around, but even then, the skirmishers continued to pile on from the roofs.

It was then that something amazing happened, the UCAF adept suddenly sent a shockwave of sorts around him, it didn't effect anyone besides the skirmishers, an electrical arc lanced out and stunned them all in their attack, the UCAF marines didn't waste time and just gunned the rest of the covenant attack teams quickly, because they knew what was coming in next.

Loud explosions took to the scene once more, as explosive shells started to rain, it seemed odd that the covenant would use such weapons, but it was a separate force of the covenant this time. Brutes were on the attack, their dark bodies hidden within the armour of their masters, the brutes had long since upgraded and now utilised the best heavy shock attack gear that was necessary for challenging the UCAF.

Shepard fired at the armour, it lasted a lot longer than that of a krogan armour design, even with AP rounds, the brute's suit shattered and it began to run at them still, it was stopped by Daniel who put a bullet into the head of the creature as it made a desperate run. The rest of the brutes were quickly and efficiently dealt with. But still Daniel didn't let up. As soon as the brutes were finished they all took a break. The main waves were coming in.

"Hey Shepard, you're going to need more than that, if you want to survive." Daniel said nonchalantly.

"What do you mean by that?" Ellen replied.

"Your gun isn't meant to deal with covenant tech, or armour, sure that weird psychic stuff might work on the small fries, but not the brutes or the elites or the ranger squads, trust me on this, you're better using one of these." Daniel handed her one of his weapons.

Shepard took the gun off the UCAF lieutenant, it was a SMG, because it said it on her Omni tool, and yet it looked like a heavily modified version of a rifle, heck it even had a shotgun attachment with a laser sight and adjusted stock. She looked at it though, it was worn and faded in places, the gun had seen more than its fair share of years.

Daniel commented.

>"That gun has saved my ass more than you can imagine Shepard, and it still does even to this day, use it for now, the ammo crate has the ammo it needs and I'm sure it would work fine for you, you've got keen eyes, and a good trigger finger. And besides, the Reaper XVI served me for a long time, she needs a good home."<p>

Shepard eyed the weapon, the name Reaper was engraved into the butt of the weapon, and the side near the nozzle stated XVI, she checked the ammo counter, it had full clips and was ready to be used. It had a setting switch on the side, it had: Fury, Devastator, Harbinger ammo. Shepard looked at the weapon in some sense of humour, she was using a reaper to kill other beings, and the irony of that thought had to be cosmic in some way.

She wouldn't have enough time to check all the features out through the final wave was on approach, Daniel yelled out.

>"Marauders, what is your profession?"<p>

"KILL EM ALL!" The troops replied in unison.

"Damn straight, let's show these fuckers why not to mess with the 405th!" He shouted.

All eyes went back to the battle ahead; the covenant had begun to march forwards, their footsteps shaking the earth around the UCAF. The marines didn't flinch; their eyes had been set to kill the first things that got into their sights. Shouts from covenant superiors and troops resounded as they made their run at the UCAF, they came into sight of just a wall of covenant grunts, and Daniel smiled.

"They're marching their cannon fodder again, which means they're finishing off their last reserve troops, they're desperate." He commented firing off his rifle.

Shepard looked at him, she didn't know how the covenant functioned but Daniel said it as though he knew every little detail, he fired without stopping, dozens dropped in moments, but the grunts were still rushing ahead without time to think. Shepard didn't waste her time with the SMG, she fired with her Mattock, and she still had another 50 shots before she had to start with anything else.

As covenant ranks dropped the enemy began to rush, jackals and skirmishers teams rushed forwards passed the fallen grunts, and they

attempted to distract the troops to hold them from firing on the superiors, while brutes came over to also rush. There was still one more thing. The trench line was hit by a wave of high explosive blasts, the gunners pointed their weapons away from the infantry and over to a target that Shepard could barely see from the whole battle, but it became apparent that whatever was coming wasn't good.

The first of the large covenant forces arrived, it was an armoured shell with a cannon in one arm and a shield in the other, Shepard had never seen something like that before, it was bigger than a geth prime, and looked even more deadly. But it didn't manage to get far, a sharp crack sent the walking tank backwards, Legion had saved his sniper for this occasion the Widow was now blasting away at the armour, but not penetrating it enough.

The marines were all concentrating their fire on the tanks, there were another 3 more which appeared in moments and they too began to attack. But it seemed as though the more they fired the more they just annoyed the creatures, untilâ€¦|

Shepard was about to yell something when a flash of light caught the creature in the arm, the shield arm melted in moments and then the whole tank blew apart, the others followed suit, with one trying to escape from the attacks. Shepard whirled about to see what had killed the tanks so quickly, the Cougar HPC was there and covering them with its quad gauss guns, the barrels fired in constant streams of deadly hyper velocity rounds all tearing the covenant tanks to shreds.

But there was no rest for them yet, Daniel yelled.
>"Hold tight, Revenant attack squads are bringing spectre transports over. Keep down!"<p>

Shepard looked over to see a whole lot of vehicles running at them, now she understood why Jordan had brought out the Cougar, the enemy troop vehicles, but what amazed he was the fact that when they fired on them, they had deflected the shots with shields. Shepard had seen a lot of things, but this was ridiculous! Enemy vehicles closed the distance at astounding speeds, gauss fire removed some of the vehicles but not all, Shepard couldn't even penetrate the shields with her Mattock and it ran out just as she hit the driver.

Shepard swore as she pulled out her hand cannon, the pistol cracked as it fired on the enemy vehicles, but still nothing. Daniel had stopped firing, and just bid his time, the covenant transports arrived on top of them and then he did something, he pulled a grenade and lobbed it exactly where the enemy troops disembarked, he fired at the stunned troops, some fell quickly, but there were still too many.

Troops began to engage in hand to hand with the enemy troops, jackals and skirmishers engaged in CQC and brutes ran into the trench, Garrus stopped firing and fell back with Tali to Shepard, they all watched as the covenant closed into fight them in hand to hand.

>"Shepard, they're getting awfully close, as much as I like to see how much more mutilation my face can take I think it can wait another time."<p>

Shepard would have been laughing if she wasn't so concerned about how dangerous those brutes looked up close. One managed to jump past and land in front of them, it was about to fire, but it never managed to

get beyond movingâ€¦ a blade punctured its rib cage and then its torso exploded in a vibrant scarlet gore.

Daniel dropped the body and then went on killing the others in the trench, his weapons blazed as he ran at them at full tilt, he didn't even shout or scream he just looked at each target and eliminated them as though he was programmed, avoiding strikes from the covenant troops he hacked into them with deadly ease, his weapons and blades making a mockery of the sheer size of his enemies.

Other marines did pretty much similar, but were slower in hacking their enemies apart, back in the rear the others of the Normandy crew helped out, firing and blasting, and using their biotics. But still the UCAF was butchering the covenant so quickly it wasn't even funny, Shepard fired as much as she could. Her pistol clicked out another overheated heat sink, she then fired again, the rounds missed their target and missed the only chance of avoiding being tackled by the large being that was called an elite.

Shepard watched as the being kicked Garrus and Tali out of the way, it was about to slice into her with an energy blade when Daniel leapt on top of the being and rammed a knife into its trachea, the alien staggered and dropped as the marine dragged it down. In moments she was helped up by Garrus and Tali, but the sight before them made them sick. Daniel was ripping his blade repeatedly into the torso of the alien until it stopped moving, but most of its organs had been exposed in the brutal assault, the marine picked himself up and went back to firing.

"Geez, I've seen a lot of things in C-sec, but that was the single scariest thing I've seen happen to a being while alive." He said.

"Keelah, what drives them to do this?" Tali asked.

"Not sure, but I doubt we'd find out any time soon." Shepard replied as she checked her Mattock.

The gun had been busted by the alien's attack, the chamber had been dented and the stock busted, it'd take a lot of work for Jacob to fix it now, she doubted that he'd end up scrapping the thing in the end. She removed the UCAF SMG; the Reaper looked like it could use a lot more attention now. She checked the weapon for safety and then cocked it.

"Let's finish this." She said.

Garrus acknowledged and so did Tali; they'd always stick close to the commander. They'd been around from the beginning, why not now? They went back into the fight, but most of their enemies had already been wiped out by the UCAF marines, the elites were battling hard, but still this wasn't over just yetâ€¦

The heavy foot falls shook the earth as something very large approached, anyone of the marines could tell what that was. And it was coming right at them.

XXXXX

"So, where is my dream?"

"It's a continuation of reality."

"But where is my reality?"

"That's at the end of your dream."

Rey Unit 0001 - Rey Unit 1000

XXXXXX

Rey could feel his body swimming through the motion of life, the dream pulling at his mind, or was this reality? He couldn't figure out it himself, it was always so confusing, death was so much an illusion as it was a reality, he had died so many times, was life even a reality anymore, or was it the facet of life which he couldn't not understand? Why was it like this? Why was he like this? He couldn't understand anymore. Was the reality of this a dream; was purpose of dream a reality? Death had come so often to claim him yet he awoke in another and another, he couldn't discern who he was, was he even alive? Was he a real thing? Or was he the dream? Was the end another lie? Or was that the reality?

He opened his eyes, his mind flowing so slowly as he moved in the zero gravity, he couldn't feel what it was like to be alive inside, he just wanted to feel something either than this. But it always turned to nothing, why was that? He reached for the controls, he felt gravity shift. Even a dream has an end, and reality has an end, so he'd wait till then, for now he was alive, in a dream, in a reality, in a paradox to which he could not escape.

He watched as the lights from the heavens came closer to him, he reached out; he was going to be with them again, when he dreamt. He smiled.

"It's time to dream again Rey."

XXXXXX

(Okay, now you need to understand is that the Rey story thing is just an arc for an upcoming character who is still on the backburner so just wait for now. The main story is shifting and as I said the covenant in this are much harder to kill, and the UCAF is more determined to kick the living crap out of them. They also happen to be mostly child soldiers, and don't worry, there's a grimdark arc still to come, the UCAF and Covenant war is one filled with them.)

So I do want to know, any characters you'd like to submit into this story?

Just follow my previous submission plans and I'll give you feedback on if the OC would work and if I accept, now just one thing, this is a more grimdark setting so try to understand that these characters I am introducing are pretty emotionally deep, including Daniel who is well, messed up.

Any suggestions?

4. Chapter 4

CH4: Burning Skies

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(Now I know I stuffed something up in the previous chapter, the ME universe does have something's that the Halo universe would really want and I did forget about the Omni tools that the teams use and etc. so I'm going over that when I can in this chapter, and also I think you should know that the UCAF is not the UNSC, they're very different forces, they may use some similar tech, but the UCAF is far more militaristic and uses a lot more morally unacceptable means of fighting war, so don't go yelling your heads off if you don't know the whole story, and also Jordan is someone special.)

And also 'Aldo' Markov is memory of a friend who died from cancer in 2006. And if you can guess all the OCs, are my friends and their relations to each other, you'll know soon enough anyway.

Quick note, someone has brought to my attention that I have been rather vague on a lot of my stories as to their interconnectivity, and I realise that they are really confusing, even I get lost on where things end and start vice versa, so as of now, all stories I create are just stand alone no actual connections, and I should have done this much sooner to avoid complications, so just bear with me when I begin a whole load of rewrites, only a few would actually relate the rest will be written off as something else completely unrelated. And also to anyone who has ideas I'll have to hold until I can sort this crap out. That said, my exams do not finish until November sometime so you'll have to get back to me in December as something has happened to one of my family members overseas and well they're very unwell don't get back until December and even then I might have a lot of work on my plate because of things, 2012 will not be easy for me.

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The footfalls shook the ground in constant and steady beats, Shepard and the Normandy crew looked to see what was on approach, but it wasn't hard to see what it was, it was over 40ft tall. The purple chitin like armour glowed with energy lines, the machine walked at a steady pace to approach their position, marines ran about yelling orders, only Daniel Lazoroski didn't move, the lieutenant simply stared at the machine and walked back to Shepard.

"You're going to have to move your team out of the way, I and the rest of the 405th are going to have to board it and the explosion will wash over here if we are successful." Daniel advised.

"Wait you're going to board that thing?" Tali said with disbelief.

"That's tantamount to suicide from what I can see on that thing." Shepard added.

"Yeah, well that's how we live commander, suicide or not, that fucker needs to come down, besides no one said anything it being easy, this isn't a job for the faint hearted. The galaxy is a big place commander, I won't be missed." Daniel said walking by.

Marines began to pull out sets of backpacks, Shepard could see that they weren't just backpacks, they were jetpacks. Some marines test fired their jets and prepared to make their suicide run, Shepard moved over and called the teams back together. They all gathered back at the HPC where Jordan kept his quad barrelled gauss turret aimed at the covenant machine, he watched intently without blinking.

Shepard was greeted by confused questions and looks from the crew.

>"Commander, what are they doing?" Jacob asked.<p>

"A suicide run on the enemy walker from what their lieutenant told me, they said that it had to be taken down, so they plan on jumping onto it with jetpacks and then hopefully destroy it with some plan of theirs." Shepard replied somewhat sarcastically.

"That's insane, trying to board that thing would likely get them all killed, that's if the guns on that thing didn't wipe them out first." Miranda commented.

"Yeah, well I say let em, it isn't out place to decide what they should do, they're fucking crazy or just damned determined, let em goes it'll probably be better for them." Zaeed said without caring as much.

"Now I'm not one for much suicide missions, but they don't stand a chance." Kasumi said.

"How can you be so sure, they seemed determined to take it down, and they are much more skilled in this, or else they wouldn't try to do something this stupid now would they?" Grunt said aloud.

Legion observed and then commented. "All their skills in fighting have shown clear understanding that they do know how to take action against hostiles, they may have chances of success, however high mortality is probable."

"This does not bode well with me, if it were not for their skills in battle I would have agreed that they do not have the ability to deal with such a threat. However looking upon their ability to battle the enemies so efficiently have made me see that they are capable." Samara stated.

"Capable, possibly suicidal, however do find that UCAF have very capable infantry, these adolescent troops do not however seem capable of surviving their mission." Mordin analysed.

"SO WHAT? We just let the kids kill themselves throwing themselves at that thing?" Jack partially yelled in frustration.

"Well they're damned determined to, so what do we do?" Shepard asked them all.

"Take their place?" Garrus suggested candidly.

It was then another voice interrupted.

>"How about you all just let them do their jobs?"<p>

They turned around to see Jordan who had stepped off the Cougar and

was now smoking near them again, this time he was in armour and interested in what was being said. He looked away as though he should have better things to do, but he was speaking to them. He continued unabated.

>"Daniel's leading the attack which means he knows what he's doing, as do I, so just let him go, besides once he heads out we'll be left to deal with the covenant stragglers in the meantime."<p>

Shepard threw a cautious glance and asked.

>"What do you mean by 'knows what he's doing'?"<p>

"Daniel has reached the end of his life span, and his reliability in the field, he's trying to find a suitable end, even without help, he just wants to find a good one." Jordan replied.

Shepard looked at the teenager in absent shock, it wasn't on her face but she registered it.

>"You're telling us he's trying to kill himself?"<p>

"What else am I talking about, flippin Anomian Roos? Of course he's trying to get killed, why else take a suicide mission alone." Jordan said sarcastically.

"He's going alone, when did that happen?" Jacob commented.

"Just about 4 minutes ago, he's leaving soon, the bomb's going to take that scarab down and probably him with it. There are about two dozen covenant guards and about 6 turrets not counting the AA battery, so yeah he's determined to end them." Jordan expressed with not a care in his words.

"Are you serious, what the hell does he think he's doing?" Miranda said.

Jordan started to laugh. "Ha, ha, ha, you don't understand shit about the UCAF tradition during the past 26 years so better not bother now. All I can say is that Daniel had reached his own ability to fight and wants to end it as quickly as possible; he won't take anyone else because it's a one way trip. And all we have to do is just sit and wait, he's not coming back and the Major won't let you go."

The Normandy team looked at him in absolute disgust. Tali commented.

>"You don't give a damn about others like him? What sort of fellow marine are you?"<p>

The comment was returned by one glare that had more than fury inside of Jordan, his cigarette even burned brighter when she had commented. He spoke in a single most dangerous voice that could have easily made even the most experienced soldier back in terror.

>"Don't fucking patronize me on my fellow soldiers, when you have no idea what the fuck happens here, you don't say shit about them and me, we all have our reasons, and mine isn't far away. If you hadn't realised I'll end up like him in the end, no longer of actual use in the field, and you'll never understand. You might hear of it, but you'll never understand the lives we live. SO FUCK OFF."<p>

Tali took a visible step back, and the others felt as though aggravating the UCAF marauder wasn't the best thing to do in the field. The marauder looked away and said.

>"Daniel's gone, so just wait for the signal and just wait for the covenant, don't worry it won't be long, and by the way, you might want to fight a little bit harder this time, the covenant doesn't wait for slackers to adjust, so get it right the first time or you'll have a lot of body bags to fill."<p>

The impression that Jordan had left was apparent, where was their place to say anything about Jordan or the UCAF marines, they didn't know a damn thing about what was going on and what happened. But in that time they didn't realise how much time had passed, a resounding explosion shook the ground, they all turned to see that the scarab that had been not so far away was now gone, instead a whole mushroom cloud of smoke rising from the area.

"Damn, didn't know that they would go so far." Jacob stated in shock.

"Yeah, well that's the life of the UCAF, or what Jordan calls it. What the hell is going on, why all this despair all this war, I don't get it, the UCAF didn't seem anything like this when we were in space now on the ground it's like bipolar, one being as helpful, and the other absolutely resentful and despairing." Miranda commented.

"Well that's how they live, can't really blame them now can you?" Garrus commented.

That was when marines started to yell out orders, the team split back up into groups, running back into the defence lines they were immediately being fired upon, plasma mortars and cannons fired in bursts upon their positions, Shepard suddenly remembered all those damned fights in close quarters and compared to this, she'd rather face a damned YMIR.

Shepard heard the loud chatter from the UCAF heavy weapons teams as they opened fire upon the incoming enemy troops, Shepard peaked over to get a clear view, however what she could see wasn't pretty. A whole wave was coming at them in an endless tide; she guessed that scarab was meant to weaken their defensive position to allow for the main force to try this again.

Activating disruptor ammunition on the squad's weapons, she fired at the enemy troops, the only ones that dropped were either covenant cannon fodder or jackals, the rest continued on right at them, Jacob had the grenade launcher and Shepard and the Arc Projector. Now would be the best time to use the damned thing before they get swamped.

She pulled the grey and black metal weapon, it wasn't that heavy compared to other weapons, but she wished that this thing came with more than 30 shots. The first blast sent a number of the covenant troops sprawling over the ground, but the more powerful units still ran at them, their shield gauntlets holding against the energy dispersion. She fired another 3 more blasts but it only yielded the same results, the covenant troops fell but not the high ranked officers or troops.

The covenant had adapted a unique formation, their heavies took the brunt of damage to their shields because they could and the rear most lines would not be as effected. Shepard yelled out.

>"Samara, Miranda use vortex and levitate, don't let their command

troops past!"<p>

The two biotics responded sending their powers outwards, the impacts sent the covenant spearhead downwards, and sent some into a spin, the covenant wasn't fazed by the attacks completely though, others continued their attack and most couldn't stop. They were still heading at them at full tilt, they barely had 50m to spare and the situation was turning grim.

Sargent Major Nicholas roared.
>"Fix Bayonets!"<p>

The troops hit a small trigger on the sides of their rifles and soon whole 15 inch blades popped out from the undersides of their weapons, the troops waited patiently to get the covenant into range, the covenant had seen quite a bit of the UCAF's ability to bring to bear very lethal weapons. The troops and Shepard didn't need to wait long, the first to jump into the trench were the covenant Skirmishers and Jackals. The UCAF marines quickly hacked into them before going over to face the covenant main body.

4:1 odds were not always good for many races; however such rules didn't apply to the UCAF. They just went into the rough of a battle and killed everything in sight until they were either dead or tired. Shepard continued to add her own firepower, but running low on thermal clips usually did tend to be a pain in the ass. She quickly armed her shotgun and began to fire into close proximity of enemy troops, a few managed to stay out of range, but not all.

The Eviscerator blew chunks out of an approaching brute and took another 3 small fries behind it, Shepard sparingly used the weapon and only upgraded it when necessary, and the weapon bucked another time and sent another group of stubby aliens into a pile of blood. But the fact was still obvious now that they were about to be overrun. However the UCAF marines didn't care, Shepard watched as a marine bayoneted an elite and then fire into the body at full auto, the blood lathered the ground and the marine as he went into bloodlust killing dozens of covenant troops without caring how much fire was being directed at him.

Sargent Major Nichol shouted.
>"Give them hell and back marines! There is no retreat, no mercy, just death! Remember Prodigal!"<p>

The troops roared with pride and defiance they shouted patriotically, they battled viscously. Jack and Miranda along with Samara and the other biotics sent a massive wave, their signature team shockwave, the whole tidal wave of biotic energy smashing the covenant attack. But it didn't mean that the covenant was dead, they got back up and continued without thinking, the marines gladly met them head to head.

Shepard watched as a marine skewered a brute through the base of the skull and then brought it down and then twisted the bear his rifle on another group of covenant troops. The whole trench was a bloody free for all. Shepard went about slamming her fist into the face of a skirmisher, and Tali fired her geth shotgun, the weapon blew apart a jackal, and Garrus got a lot of headshots.

That was then an elite appeared, it had a vibrant white and silver

armour. The alien blasted at Garrus knocking the turian head over heels, the being then landed a kick at Tali's side, the quarian swore aloud and then hit the ground, Shepard opened up her shotgun and fired every shell into the shields of the elite, however the rounds didn't all go through, the elite brought up a wrist shield and deflected the attacks and then charged.

Shepard couldn't avoid the shield bashing she received as the trench was far too narrow for anything bigger than a marine, Shepard felt the wind knocked clear out of her chest, however she could still fight, she brought her legs to knock the elite off guard, however the alien wasn't hampered by her scrawny legs, unless she had serious augmentations she wouldn't do much at all to an elite in hand to hand.

The elite grabbed her and brought its shield, the gauntlet then transformed into a sword, the combined hybrid shield pointed directly at her head, the elite seemed to possess a sadistic like smile. However there was one thing that many elites should never do, entice in killing slowly while in the presence of the UCAF. The elite was interrupted as something landed on its head.

"Hey buddy, remember me?" Daniel grunted as he pulled on the neck of the alien with his knife.

The ex-helldiver shoved the knife into the neck even further and then dragged the alien to the floor, Shepard dropped onto the ground in surprise that was slightly unexpected. The marine finished the elite off quickly and efficiently removing the knife and dropping the body down. Shepard could see that Daniel had not exactly been through the best of trips, half his armour was burnt and it looked as though someone had tried to cook him alive, a shoulder guard was completely melted and his chest had a massive burn line across it.

"So, did I miss anything?" Daniel asked helping the commander up.

"Nothing much." Shepard replied still surprised.

Garrus and Tali had recovered and was just as shocked to see that the marine was still alive.

>"How the hell did you get back, I thought that Jordan said that you wanted to go off and commit suicide?"<p>

"I did, well sort of, I have the choice to go out and take whatever suicide mission I want, that doesn't mean I have to die, I just wanted to go kill something on my own. Besides that was refreshing." He explained.

"Refreshing, we all thought you just went off to die, to which you now state wasn't your entire intention and was just going out for a quick kill?" Tali said.

"Yeah, that sums my day up, kill things bigger than me, rather than waste a whole squad to get it done, it's not like the covenant are honestly going to give a damn." Daniel said checking his rifle.

Their short meeting was interrupted as the covenant began to withdraw.

>"Looks like our times upâ€¦!"<p>

A corvette appeared and began to fire into the streets, it was then slowly burning block by block of the city. Daniel hefted his knife and weapon back into their holsters.

>"Hey Shepard you might want to get out of here now, the HPC Jordan has will get picked up, me and the last of the marines are going by pelican. I'll see you around." The marine smiled as he jogged off to the Sargent Major.<p>

The rest of the crew arrived and Jacob asked.

>"Wast that who I think it was?"<p>

"Yes Jacob, the lieutenant didn't want to die, yet, he just felt bored and went to go kill something, and it seems he has a fucking heart of gold." Shepard said annoyed.

"What they fuck was Jordan talking about then?" Jack said with a bit of renewed vigour.

The young marine laughed and said.

>"You should probably understand this, when we make a decision we don't have to make it a promise, we just do as we feel, and as I said, we choose when we die, and it seems that Daniel wasn't bothered to go just yet."<p>

The crew glared at the teen who simply smirked and said.

>"Come on get back into the HPC, the Aires gunships will be coming to pick us up, unless you want to participate in this little exercise?"<p>

They looked at each other and then followed over to the HPC; the gun was being operated by a marine in full suit. As they entered they were surprised to see that everything was set away, the crew sat down inside and waited as the teen went into the driver's seat and began to set the HPC into gear. The personnel carrier drove towards a designated location to get a pickup, Shepard decided to call in Joker and tell him what was happening.

It seemed though that the Normandy got the call a few minutes prior to them pulling out so Shepard focused to the thoughts of the UCAF in and amongst the crew, they were discussing what had happened. Jack was leading the argument with some confusion.

>"So did we essentially get pissed off for nothing?"<p>

"The Helldivers had some messed up sick sense of humour, even for a living being." Jacob commented.

Jordan appeared and took a seat and a drink out.

>"Well that's how we live boys and girls, death comes and tries to take us, but we just shrug and say, why now? Why not later, when life gives you lemons, make lemonade, or should I say combustible explosive adhesive acid?"<p>

The crew looked at the young weapons expert, they had disbelief very much apparent on their faces, Shepard asked. "What the hell makes this any better Jordan, the fact that you don't care or your friend doesn't?"

Jordan chuckled.

>"I don't? Hah, that's a good one, obviously I don't care. What you get that after the past 6 hours we've been on the ground? A helldiver lives to look after themselves as individuals, only those who are blood bound should ever care for those in their own squads, I don't care because he isn't my responsibility, sure if our mission was together, but we aren't blood bound so no, neither of us care. Daniel does what he wants as much as what I do."<p>

"So you're saying that he just does it because he feels like it?" Shepard asked with a raised eyebrow.

"Yeah, pretty much, can't blame one another. But then again, it's different for you isn't it? You seek to help those you know, or try to understand them, but you shouldn't do that with the Helldivers, we seek nothing but to find ourselves in war. That said I seek to wait for my own end, not now, but maybe later, when it matters. We of those who are left after all our squad mates have died end up as wanderers seeking death. I quoteâ€| 'Ashes to ashes, brothers till the end, we live and we serve, our purpose bound in blood, and our lives tied to our ends. We seek nothing but acclimation from this life after all is doneâ€|' that was said by a very wise marine, who first founded the UCAF Helldivers over 81 years ago." Jordan replied.

"Never took you for the philosophical one." Shepard stated in some amazement.

"The UCAF has very impressive people; I just live my life as they do, just remember this though. Something's are better left unsaid." Jordan warned.

Shepard and the others simply looked at him, and then their peace was interrupted.

>"Arms Specialist Lieutenant Jordan, we're here, docking bay 5 has cleared us next to the Normandy."<p>

"Well looks like your stop, I won't see you off, just exit, and also Shepardâ€|" Jordan said peaking over as he lay in a chair.

"Yes?"

"The Reaper XVI needs proper maintenance, don't bother giving it back anyway, Daniel's going elsewhere. Just remember to go meet with Arms Master Engle, he'll give you the necessary tools and gear to keep the Reaper in check." Jordan finished before falling asleep in his chair.

Shepard didn't know what to say, the young man just fell asleep, she decided to just listen to his advice and just continue on. Exiting into the hangar of the massive station once again, this time they found that they were in a gravity bay, probably a few levels away from the main section. The Normandy was secured by landing gear of the hangar. Shepard was at least happy to see that they weren't going over anymore random bullshit.

It took moments before Captain Lukas appeared with a small group of officers, his face was unreadable, due to him being an android and AI, it gives him the best poker face in the whole galaxy. He arrived with a passive stride.

>"Commander Shepard, I'd like you to meet with ONI Lieutenant Allan Ullanday, he's an informationintelligence officer with the Office of Naval Intelligence. Essentially he's a spook."

Shepard didn't like the title already, but the person in question was young, he looked about 17, short black hair, slightly brown skin, soft chestnut eyes, he didn't look anything like a spook. But seeing as Jordan could punch the living crap out of Grunt and pull a gun that weighed about a few hundred kilograms she wouldn't be so sure about him.

He held out a hand and said with a slightly interested smile.
"Greetings commander, I have heard quite a bit about you from Captain Lukas. He tells me that you're stranded here in the Nova Stratus regions."

Shepard took the greeting and replied.
>"Yes, I did believe I told him a few things, though not much into detail."<p>

Allan then stated.
>"Oh don't worry about that, you're having a full briefing with me, just to clarify our situation with yours as a goodwill between you and ONI, we'd really like you to participate with us. I am to have a meeting with you in private in my office; it's at 18:30 ship board time. That gives us about 3 hours to get something's done and then meet."<p>

"Where's your office?" Shepard asked.

"Level 32 section 3 SEC-023 don't worry about directions, Lukas has already mapped it out and will transfer the location to your Omni tool." Allan replied.

"Okay, I'll see you there then." Shepard said.

The officer gave a curt nod before departing; he seemed to give off an aura of reassurance that made the commander feel odd about him. This wasn't normal; it was then that Lukas said to her.

>"Be careful commander, Allan possesses low psychic fields, adept class ones, he can manipulate things around him, not to mention feelings, he's that powerful."<p>

"What?" Miranda stated.

"Allan's the UCAF equivalent of an interrogator, he's just more subtle, the UCAF only uses them in certain aspects of the military, and we don't use it on each other though since we're all on the same side, but be careful, if the ONI knows about you. They're going to try to get a lot of info from you." Lukas quickly saluted and hurried off.

Shepard felt that this meeting was going to be much harder to avoid telling the ONI spook off about certain things.

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"Wait, you're seriously taking up this guy's offer?" Joker nearly coughed up his coffee as he listened to Shepard.

"What else am I supposed to do? He's the one that the ONI and the UCAF are using to learn about us more, not to mention that he's an official intelligence officer with psychic powers, trust me on this, if anything on that planet taught me, it was not to piss off their adepts and their troops." Shepard replied.

"So let's see, take a blind date with a possible psychic who could mind rape us all like we couldn't imagine, and hope to god that he doesn't forego formalities and completely drains your head of all info and then wipe out all traces of the discussion? That sounds like a very blind date Shep."

>Joker said with obvious concern.<p>

Miranda stepped up and voiced her opinion as well.

>"Commander we're all worried about the same thing, the ONI spook gives me the creeps though, he's just sending out energy even I can feel, and they don't say anything good about talking to him. I don't know why but his psychic powers feel like they react negatively with us for some reason."<p>

Mordin voiced similar thoughts.

>"Possible that operative is unlike other members of UCAF, very cautious as individual and possibly much to hide, if you were to meet him alone, he would most probably learn everything and wipe your memory."<p>

"Well, then he could just wipe all our memories and rewrite them couldn't he? Then what would the point be in arguing? I might as well try to deal with this upfront." Shepard replied.

"True, but are sure commander, the last thing we want is this Spook to know more than us." Jacob cautioned.

"I'm sure I'll be fine. Besides if worse comes to worse, we can act like it never happened." Shepard said.

The crew couldn't say much else to make the commander reconsider what she was going to do, the meeting was happening either way. Shepard left the Normandy and followed her Omni tool, the lifts dropped her off at the designated meeting place, which was a very busy section of the Libra of Hell, and the station was more active than before, with thousands of civilians packed aboard in non-critical sections of the station.

Shepard arrived finally to the room; it was rather empty, only a few items of interest lined the walls, mostly awards and small pieces of art. Allan sat at a desk with two data pads, he was reading quietly to himself before he looked up to say.

>"Welcome commander, I do hope that you do feel comfortable, usually these sorts of meetings with people tend to be rather odd of sorts."<p>

"I can imagine." Shepard replied.

"So, where to begin, ah yes, this alternate universe you come fromâ€| this is a rather interesting event, but not impossible. ONI should have seen this one coming for a long time." Allan stated as he ran his mind about it.

"What do you mean?" Shepard asked.

"Nothing, don't worry, but yes, could you explain your universe to me, this time of 2186?" He piqued.

The commander explained how the HSA was formed, the mass effect fields, and element zero, biotics were complicated to explain, and Allan honestly didn't care, biotic powers to him seemed useless seeing as he could wipe people's minds with a thought, so it really didn't matter. Shepard went through the history about the turian and human war. The lieutenant was a little surprised; the UCAF would have taken a similar approach, if not a slightly different one, but didn't question anything. Shepard skimmed over a few things, but kept in mind about avoiding the reapers and the war against the galactic threat. She mentioned a few things about Cerberus, which in turn seemed to concern the Lieutenant.

After the long talk, Shepard asked.

>"So lieutenant I exchanged all I know, how about you start explaining to me about the UCAF?"<p>

"Ah the UCAF, the history of what you see nowâ€¦ well I should probably tell you, but be warned things aren't as they always seem with us." He warned.

"I can tell." Shepard said with sarcasm.

Allan brought up a holographic image of the First Fleet.

>"The UCAF wasn't founded until 2471, before then we were called the First Fleet, a desperate gathering of ships from earth in 2220 when the massive operations to inhabit systems began, slip-space was much more unstable for us back then, but we managed, 110 ships of the First Fleet carried countless thousands across towards the Nova Stratus region, however an accident occurred around a bend where a high ion storm occurred, it sent the whole fleet into disarray and landed us here in Nova Stratus in about 1 week. We found that we were cut off from the UNSC by over 750 light years in the middle of nowhere.<p>

That was when the colony ships began to splinter, a majority stayed with us, but many others set off for their own worlds, we couldn't stop them so we just went on looking, after 3 weeks the first fleet arrived at Nova Stratus, our total population was somewhere around 250,000 and was set to increase as we adapted to our world. It took another 150 years before we ever left our world in search of the other colonies.

Now this part I should warn you about, Nova Stratus is not as it seems commander, there are many secrets, one being that we weren't the only humans here in the region. It was discovered that of the 120 worlds we inhabited, there were 50 already with other living humans on them, we were surprised to say the least, and we inquired into how our populations were split, the other humans had no idea and just stated that they just lived there.

Shepard interrupted.

>"Wait other humans here before you colonised?"<p>

Yes, how do you think we have such a high population? We couldn't possibly get to 72 billion within 300 years, now could we with only 1 million colonists? No, that would be nearly impossible, the chances

were astronomical. The only thing we could come up with was that they were brought here, either from earth, or some other power, as an example, the Hikage system was one of the most famous, they dated back over 100,000 years back, their race was brought by something called the Juggernaut of the Chosen, a massive construct that created them, there was a strange occurrence though, the thing that brought them to this world was a machine.

Shepard interrupted again.

>"A machine created the human race?"<p>

"Commander honestly could you stop interrupting so I can explain, there are a lot of things that you don't sure as heck know about, and I am trying to explain. " Allan said annoyed.

"Sorry." Shepard apologised.

Yes, the humans of the Hikage region were not born of flesh, they had arrived much like the other worlds, by a strange machine, it was geometrically designed for space travel and it was not of human creation, it was a more powerful creation. The Hikage people called the race that created them, the Forerunners, an ultra-advanced race. There was also another reason to this belief, the Hikage people were altered, their gene markers were adjusted by a significant degree, it granted them enhanced strength and reaction, making them lethal warriors, but their population was low and scattered over an entire system, 4 planets to be sure. But they managed to build up a lot in 100,000 years.

The other worlds that were inhabited were also, Valence, the Titan Cluster, the Orussian systems, Pyros, Viscos Strata, Tempest Terra, Calliban, the Void Ends, and the Anomian system. These were the main regions where the human race was most concentrated upon. The interesting thing was that our entire gene markers were altered between each one and each form of humanity was segregated to a point where we adapted and evolved differently.

To state what, the Valence system was inhabited by half wolf people, just as a screw up, not an actual race, their ship crashed into a tree due to a miscalculation in trajectory, their whole ship then had to recalibrate the gene markers and guess what. It seemed that their creators had made them half wolf to adapt, but also because the gene marker was destroyed by accident, so it compensated, creating a half wolf version of the human race. Thankfully after 100,000 years of being together, their whole race managed to reverse some of the damage done, they are more human now than they were 40,000 years back.

The others had the same things, a few of them managed to save their creator ships and even explain to us what happened. It was amazing that they even spoke our language, well most, only 30 had a Latin based system of English, others either had something close or were not in any known language we've seen. Either than that, we learnt more about the ancient race, and with each discovery, we brought more of our kin together to unite, and we gave them advancements in technology, including slip space and well star ships.

"Doesn't that sound a little dangerous? They must have had some varying opinions of the other races of humanity and yourself." Shepard said.

Yes well, you are correct, at that time the other races hadn't a care in the universe who had been here first or who was here, so they didn't care and just accepted the technology. About 30 worlds had reached space flight while others had reached heavy industrial age, some managed to reach 21st century earth development and were beginning to discover slip-space, and we just gave them a nudge in the right direction so they could help us.

After the 150 years of colonisation and unification the first inter-colonial alliance was formed, we called it the ICA. It was then that a government was founded on the main capital of Anomia, just for the purpose of it being the primary system of the Nova Stratus region and the primary producer in technology and science; it had most of everything we needed. And it was also there that the Colonial Intelligence Office was formed.

CIO worked to do what ONI did, however their focus was to hide some of the truth from the public about us being created by aliens, and the thoughts would definitely cause an up stir and possibly future conflicts. The ICA didn't wish for anything to disrupt the new government so they employed as many agents into each world as possible, and by the 150 years of the new ICA, everything was stable.

"But it didn't last?" Shepard guessed.

The ICA began to feel some problems, not all systems agreed to the ICA of the Republic design, it was too easy for corruption and dissidence to set in, and the elite of the ICA began to feel the pressure more, as we began to militarise. The colonies needed protection, not only from pirates, which were very rare, but from each other. The ICA Forces, which was known as the ICAF quickly, took to the scene to enforce peace and stability. Their numbers weren't as strong, but they sent the message along directly to the people.

"And then things started to collapse?"

The systems could only bottle up so much after so long, the Hikage people were going overboard with their imperial expansion, they had a progressive ideology of that of ancient Japan, and then just ran over the whole ICAF and expanded further westwards to the core of the galaxy, in their pursuits they explored their technological and genetic advancements, terraforming included. They had an impressive 9.6 billion by the 150 years and took 240 systems in that time. They were not violent, but honour bound to their ancients, warrior like beliefs, but not violent. The Imperial Coalition was then formed for their whole race, to which they began to use even more technology in their military and biology; they first developed rail weaponry ahead of the ICAF.

It was then that the other powers rapidly began to expand as well to meet with the ICAF and the Hikage, though they didn't have the technological side of things, they had the military design and doctrine down without a hitch. The Vaulken Imperialists began to expand and form the Zodiac Empire in the North West and the surrounding region. The ICAF attempted to stabilise the situation but it only drove another 3 more factions to form, only 50% of the ICA stayed loyal to its cause.

By the time of 2375 the first wars began, the Imperial Coalition and the Zodiacs began to fight for control of the Western systems and then to the East, the ICAF was backed into a corner trying to keep systems neutral, and thus we could only watch and wait. It was at this point that the whole population of 50 billion people now began to feel the effects of war.

The first colonial war went on for 5 years before ending, and then after wards another war occurred 20 years later, with graver consequences as the Orussian Military took arms. Clone armies were used in the second colonial wars, which almost ravaged over 40 systems and left countless millions dead, the ICAF finally intervened in the final war of 2451, and then they forced all sides to stop the war. It was then that they realised the situation of the people, and decided to stop the wars. 150 million dead over a period of 65 years wasn't a good thing, the ICAF took a reform and then became the UCAF in 2571.

In 2571 though there was an incident, the UCAF encountered the UNSC, ONI SEC 3 in their system, it seemed that the UNSC would reabsorb the UCAF, and the 60 billion plus colonists, but they didn't, the UNSC wasn't even involved in the knowledge of the UCAF. ONI came with an offer to the UCAF, access to their technological developments in slip-space and knowledge about the Forerunners, the UCAF couldn't deny that the offer was tempting and better than starting another colonial war.

ONI also asked to be allowed access to the gene profiles of the old Imperial Coalition and access to their genetic advancements, the UCAF agreed to this as long as ONI helped them develop a means to keep the colonies in check and without another damned war to weaken them. The agreement was made and thus the UCAF continued to exist to this day.

"But not everything was going to stay the same now was it?" Shepard inquired.

Yes, well, things didn't stay the same, peace was fragile and easily broken, and we had attained it by force and determination. However peace was very much a premium, especially with the old imperialists and certain dissention within some minor colonies. Another armed conflict only began to increase with time, until ONI took charge and began minor operations to remove the chances of colonial civil war; the missions worked and kept the chances of civil war down to a minimum.

But that didn't mean that it wasn't possible. But then things changed even more, our best scientists discovered that there were unknown quantities of slip-space emissions from further reaches of space, the UCAF then noticed this and acted to deal with the possibility of extra-terrestrials, and ONI knew more, they expected within 10 years of 2500s that there was a high chance of encountering another race or civilisation. So as a plan, or a number of plans, the UCAF prepared to face this new race, either by peace or by force, thus the ONI prepared the UCAF to gear up, militarisation took hold and soon billions were within the ranks of the UCAF fleets and forces, thus we were well and truly prepared for the arrival of the covenant as you can see.

"Prepared? Is that what you call that senseless slaughter?" Shepard

said.

"The covenant came in force commander, we did not fire first, they did, and they were determined to exterminate the UCAF, and the whole human race. We had absolutely no choice but to fight to defend ourselves, even if that meant at the cost of the young, and the brave then so be it, you can judge us in any way you want, but you've already seen the damage the covenant causes to the worlds we have, entire planets destroyed, lifeless, and those which remain put a defence barely capable of stemming the tide, listen here, for I won't tell you again. This is the Daedalus Crusade commander, there is a little over 1.4 billion covenant between you and that portal you told us about, if you want to get back to your galaxy so bad, then either think this through or don't. Either wade your sorry ass of a crew through 1.4 billion covenant troops or either help us get through them without our own forces. We'll give you the resources you need, but the only thing that you need to do is gain the trust of the UCAF, not ONI, we just watch and adjust things, we don't make a direct approach, but the offer is here and the reality that comes with it is that you don't help us you're on your own, and if you do, you need to gain the trust of the troops not us."

At the wave of the lieutenant's hand, the door slid open, he continued to sit and said.

>"You have your options set out for you, you should think them through, I won't force you to accept and neither will anyone else in the UCAF, we have bigger problems to deal with, not some universal moron who got stuck on the wrong side of the doorway, so take your crew and make up your minds."<p>

Shepard sat up in annoyed posture and left the room, she didn't need to say a damn thing, the talk with the officer had revealed more than enough for her. Not it was all up to the crew to think the rest through, if they accepted the help of the UCAF they'd be stuck fighting this war with god knows how many troops, and if they went on without a damn bit of help, they'd be dead before they knew it.

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AN: So it seems as though Shepard has a very important choice to make, and a new force of troops to meet, the UCAF history is now revealed in a bit more detail, and yes this was as close to the canon of the UCAF history as I could get, I really spent more time reading the new Forerunner sage and got to know about more about the human backstory for the halo universe, so I'm trying to reference it.

But good news is that I'm finally going to take the story in the right direction, hopefully, and I'll let a few more thing flush out, though I wish I could do better for this chapter, damn I'm running low on time.

Well hope you guys enjoy it, I've got a lot of other stuff to get doneâ€¦|

And also I think I should let you guys know about the new MLP story I've startedâ€¦|

MLP FiM: Darkest Daysâ€¦|

The story that follows a similar plot to that of 2 other stories such as Sunset by Cirton on Equestria Daily and Penstrokes famous Past Sins, I love their two stories, and thus I've tried to create a story that edged around theirs, just didn't follow up as directly, it's on my profile now. Look at it while you get the chance I'm going back to workâ€|

End
file.